

KANSAS KATE'S REMARKABLE ROLE!

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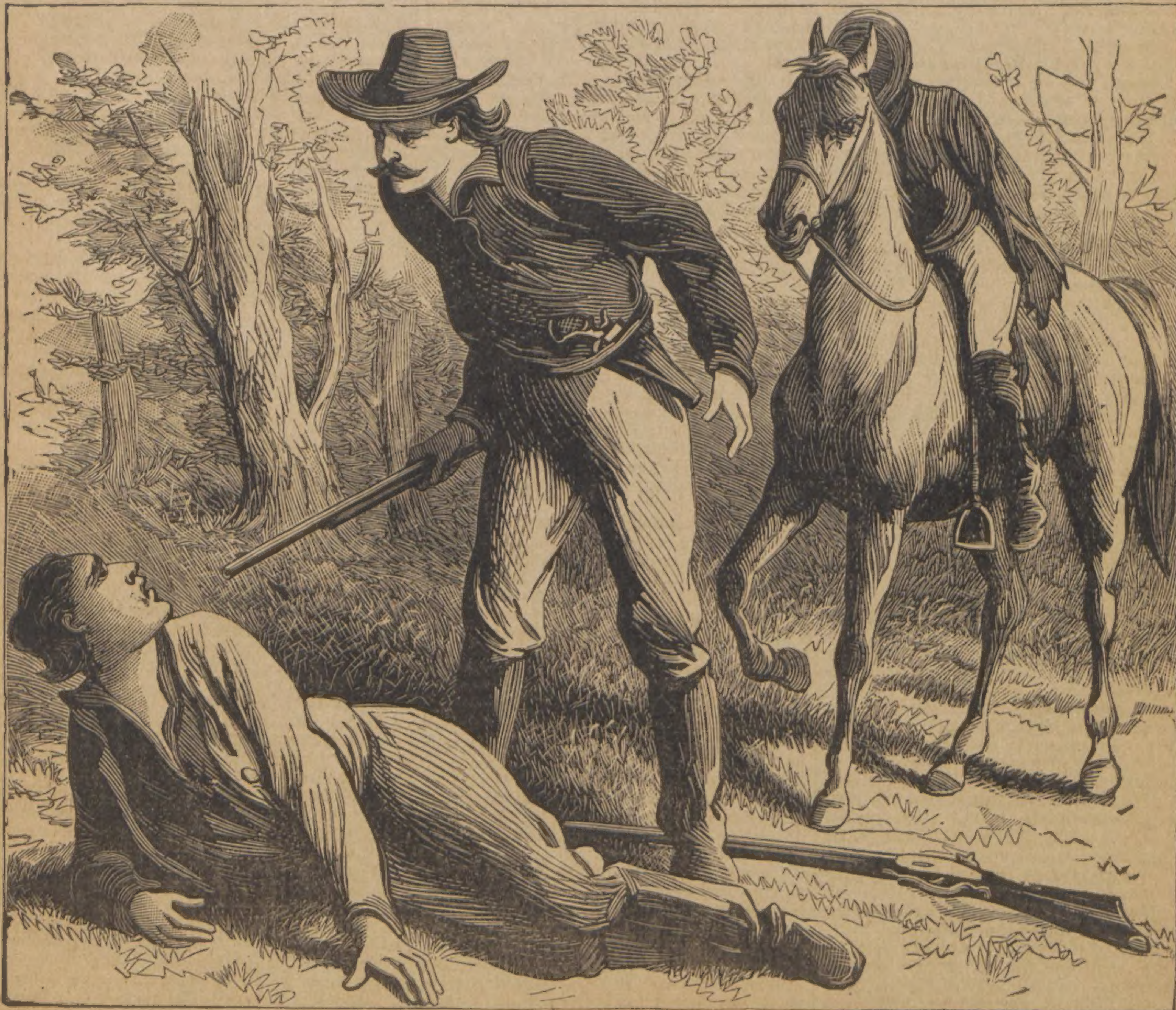
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Vol. LXIV.

BY LIEUT. A. K. SIMS.

GIP GALE'S BLOCK GAME;

Or, OLD SILVERTIP'S TIE-UP AT TANGLED PINE.



'THE FALLEN OUTLAW WAS KANSAS KATE!'

Gid Gale's Block Game;

OR,

OLD SILVERTIP'S TIE-UP AT TANGLED PINE.

BY LIEUT. A. K. SIMS,

AUTHOR OF "CHICAGO CHARLIE," "SINGER
SAM," "LODESTONE LEM," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

A BIT OF EXCITEMENT.

As the stage, running to Tangled Pine, Colorado, swung around a bend of the rocky trail, the report of a rifle rung out.

Such a thing, at such a point, meant danger; and Lee Colton, who was a new hand with the ribbons, did not tarry to investigate the cause of the shot.

He knew in his inmost heart that it came from the rifle of a road-agent. The rifle ball had whizzed unpleasantly close—in fact had nicked the box whereon he sat; and, having a due regard for the safety of his person and life, he let the reins fall and plunged from the top of the coach, like a gigantic frog taking a header into deep water.

"Let the Wells-Fargo take care of its precious stuff—I'm a-climbin'! I wasn't hired to fight! You hear me!"

This was Lee Colton's reflection, as he dashed into the sheltering pines and made good use of his heels to take him to a place of security.

The released stage-horses reared and plunged, and were on the point of dashing away.

"Out of there!" commanded the road-agent, stepping from behind the rock that had sheltered him, and leveling his weapon. "Out of there; or I'll fill the old hearse with bullets!"

He was masked and it was quite plain that his voice was given a disguising twist.

A woman's scream came from within the coach; and, at the same instant, the door was thrown open and a man attempted to leap to the ground.

A revolver swung in each hand, and the fire that blazed in the eyes of this passenger told that he meant to resist to the death.

But before he could lift his revolver—before his feet touched the earth—the excited horses made a dash up the trail, and he was pitched head-foremost, falling heavily.

The only other occupant of the stage was the woman whose scream had been heard.

The road-agent, seeing that he was about to lose the precious bullion he had hoped to finger, sprang at the heads of the horses. But the horses veered and shot by him, and raced away with comet speed, the reins trailing, and the coach bounding behind them like a rubber ball.

The trail led along a precipitous mountain-side and overhung a canyon's rim, so that the peril to the woman within the coach was very great. There were sharp angles, too, where shoulders of rock pushed the trail to the very verge of the canyon, and where a clear head and careful driving were needed to insure safety at all times.

With no guiding or restraining hand on the reins, the chances were big that, at one of these angles the coach would topple from the trail and go plunging into the black depths, dragging horses and passenger to a horrible death.

When matters seemed at their worst, a horseman dashed upon the trail from a side gorge; and taking in the situation at a glance, spurred after the runaways.

This horseman was a man of comparatively slight frame, with a beardless face and feminine cast of countenance; but there burned in his eyes a look of heroic resolution, as he plunged the rowels into the flanks of his broncho and spurred onward with furious haste.

It promised to be a stern chase, with the chances against the plucky horseman.

As he rode, bending forward on the pommel of the deep saddle, he brought forth a heavy revolver, which he swung in his right hand; while the gouging rowels, plied with merciless severity, drove the broncho to its highest gait.

"Get up! Get up!" he hissed, the commanding words shooting from between his teeth with a sound resembling jets of escaping steam.

Inch by inch, foot by foot, yard by yard, the little broncho gained on the maddened runaways.

The first angle of the trail was reached; and, though the horseman held on his way, he paled and caught his breath.

But the angle was rounded in safety; though the inner wheels were lifted from the ground, and spun in the air like crazy pin-wheels, and for one breathless moment the coach seemed going over.

The horseman drew a full breath again, and the broncho sprang along the trail as if endowed with new energy.

Only ten yards intervened, now; and this was speedily reduced to five. Then the horsemen passed the coach; crawled slowly up to the flanks of the runaways; and raced, neck and neck, with the nearest.

The trail was wider here; and apparently a new plan crossed the man's mind with the quickness of thought. He lowered the hammer of the revolver, drew his feet out of the big stirrups, and leaped for the horse's back.

The pony raced on, riderless, taking fright from this abandonment.

The daring leap of the rider was, however, ineffectual. No sooner did he touch the wheel-horse's back than he was hurled from it.

"I will save her!" he cried; and rising on one knee, he took quick aim with the revolver and fired.

The ball found lodgment in the heart of one of the leaders; but, instead of a favorable result, there came dire disaster.

The stricken leader wheeled; and threw himself sidewise, with a convulsive flounce.

The other horses were dragged down, and the coach was sheered round, pitching the hind wheels over the precipice. Thus the stage hung for an instant, quivering, as if in fear. Then the harness parted, the pole snapped, and the vehicle dropped into the abyss.

It all occurred so quickly that the man who fired the shot had not been given time to get on his legs and hurry forward. But he came on, now, with excited cries, and evidently believing the coach shattered to pieces and the passenger killed.

In a stupor of mental pain he rushed to the ledge and looked down, paying no heed to the horses that were huddled in a snarled bunch.

He uttered an exclamation of pleasure as he gazed downward. The coach had not been dashed to atoms at the bottom of the canyon; but had struck on a lower shelf, where it hung, dizzily.

"Are you hurt?" he called.

And, when no answer came, he hastened to the horses, and disengaged a pair of lines, which he looped together as he ran back.

One end of this hastily-contrived rope he secured to a point of rock; after which he lowered himself over the rim and worked his way carefully down to where the coach was hanging.

Before he succeeded in accomplishing this, however, there came indications of life from the interior of the coach. Frantic exclamations, in a feminine voice, were heard; after which one of the doors of the coach was opened and a scared face looked out.

"Thank God!" came from the lips of the man, as he dropped to the lower ledge and took a step forward.

It was a fair face in spite of the fright that now marred it.

"You don't know me," the man said, addressing the young woman with marked politeness. "But I know you! You are Josie Farnall. You are not hurt?"

"I—I don't know!" she stammered. "I'm only scared, I guess. Some one shot at the driver—and—and the horses ran away—and—"

"I understand," said the man, drawing nearer. "And I came as fast as I could on my pony to help you. You are sure you are not hurt? I was very anxious about you!"

The man bit his lips as he said this, seeming to feel that he had expressed too much interest in the welfare of a mere stranger—though his anxiety was but natural and there was really no apparent occasion for his confusion.

HAPTER II.

THE GOLD-CAMP DETECTIVE.

The passenger who endeavored to leap from the coach, swinging his revolvers, and with a fiery, fighting look in his eye, and who was precipitated heavily to the ground by the sudden starting of the horses, was much shaken up by his fall. But he was not seriously injured.

Seemingly he expected a shot from the road-agent's rifle, for he rolled over with the quickness of a cat, thereby gaining the protection of a boulder.

Before he could poke his head above the boulder, however, or throw himself on the defensive, a cotton bag dropped against his shoulder and the voice of the road-agent commanded:

"Pull that over your head, and throw up your hands! Be quick about it, too!"

To emphasize this order, the road-agent's rifle spoke, at almost the same instant; the ball burying itself in the earth near the feet of the crouching passenger.

"Pull that over your head, or you'll git the next one!" and the click of the rifle-lock was heard.

"Not by a thundering sight, I won't!" was hurled back in reply; and one of the revolvers was thrust above the boulder, and belched its contents.

The road agent had calculated on this; for no sooner had he cocked his rifle than he moved sidewise and ran swiftly but silently toward his enemy.

The pistol ball cut harmlessly through the air; and, before he knew that the road-agent was near, the crouching passenger saw that individual's face, and was stunned by the descending rifle-barrel.

The gun-barrel struck him on the right arm, almost paralyzing that member, and knocked the revolver from his grasp.

Before he could throw himself into an attitude of defense, the road-agent was on him.

But, if the latter expected to achieve an easy victory, he was destined to prove mistaken. The fighting blood of the passenger was aroused. He clasped the rifle barrel in his benumbed right hand and lifted the other revolver in his left.

"No, you don't!" the road-agent yelled, giving a violent kick, that sent this revolver spinning into the bushes. "You don't come no sich measly tricks on me!"

The coach had rattled away, dragged by those frightened horses, but neither of the combatants gave it a glance. Every thought and energy was needed right here.

It may seem a little strange that the road-agent should thus abandon the coach he had held up, and which contained the bullion he had hoped to finger. But he was wise enough to see that all hope of gain from that source passed from him with the leap of the horses; and he had also seen—a thing of more moment, at the time—that the passenger had sought the shelter of the boulder, from whence shots might be expected to rattle on the instant.

With him, as with other men, self-preservation was the first law. He felt that he must kill or disable this belligerent individual, or be himself killed.

Hence, he had leaped forward; and was now engaged in a deadly combat with the fiery stranger.

"Curse you!" he grated, striving to wrench the rifle away. "Take that!"

He struck out, savagely, with his clinched fist; but the blow was deftly avoided; and then the passenger, writhing upward until he stood erect, strove to wind his sinewy arms about the road-agent's body.

He tried too, as he did this, to brush aside the mask that hid the road-agent's face.

"No you don't!" the road-agent ejaculated, again viciously striking out.

This time he was more successful. His horny fist caught the stranger under the angle of the jaw, and hurled him backward with stunning force.

The fall was a severe one; and for a minute the stranger lay there, his face upturned to the sky, as if dead.

That attempt to unmask him had frightened the road-agent. He did not tarry to investigate the contents of the stranger's pockets, as he might otherwise have done; but sprang away from the spot, glided into the pines, and hurried down the mountain-side at a rapid pace.

His effort at holding up the coach had not been a glittering success.

Only for a minute did the passenger remain in that stupefied condition; then he came back to a consciousness of what had occurred. He sat up and looked dazedly around, as if anticipating another murderous assault.

He was not long in discovering, however, that his late assailant had abandoned the field; and, when this was made clear, he climbed to his feet by painful degrees, and felt gingerly of the bruises that ornamented him.

"Tough luck!" he muttered, picking up his revolvers that lay on the rocks. "That fellow was a customer from 'wayback! If those infernal horses hadn't started when they did—and if— Kahl! what am I moaning about? I talk as if the world was made up of 'ifs!'"

"Likely that old coach is smashed into kindling wood, and that 'girl—"

He pulled himself together, with an effort; clutched the revolvers with a firmer hold; stared up the trail, and set himself in motion.

Nothing was to be seen, now, on the trail. No indication of life;—and no sounds came, such as might have been received if the horses were still running.

His nervousness seemed to grow, as he ran along; and this caused his gait to quicken;—and, when he passed the angle where the trail narrowed, he was running at the top of his speed.

An exclamation of fright and bewilderment dropped from him, when he beheld the horses huddled in the tangled heap further up the trail, with no indication of the presence of the stage or of human life.

There could be but one conclusion—which was, that the stage had gone over the ledge; and, when he reached this startling conclusion, his heart seemed to stop its beating.

The passenger thus introduced to the reader, was a stranger to Tangled Pine and to the Tangled Pine trail.

The wild gold camp, at the head of the gulch, had been in his thoughts much of late; but he had never looked on its array of unpainted houses, nor trodden its bowlder-streets.

Yet Gid Gale, the Gold-Camp Detective, fancied that he knew more about Tangled Pine, and some of its citizens, than would most passengers who thus turned their faces toward it.

He was going there on a special mission—on a special detective mission—which might detain him for a number of days, or as many months; and had taken the unfortunate stage at Bitter Creek, some thirty miles lower down the mountain.

However, as he rushed up the trail at that furious pace, he was not thinking of Tangled Pine, or the man he expected to shadow there, but of the young woman who had ridden with him in the coach from the station at Bitter Creek.

She was an exceedingly comely young woman—really a handsome girl, Gid Gale had fancied—and he shivered, as he thought of her, lying a mangled and bleeding heap, on the rocks below the ledge.

People become quickly acquainted in a stage-ride of such duration. They can hardly avoid acquaintanceship, when, as in this case, there are only two passengers in the coach.

Therefore, the young man and the young woman had talked of the scenery, and of the weather, and of the Italian skies of summer, and the death-laden blizzards of winter; and had progressed more toward a lasting friendship than would have been possible in a month under any other circumstances.

Gid Gale would hardly have cared to confess that he was already half in love with this young woman;—and yet, such was the fact; and this fact made his heart beat the louder and his breath come the quicker, as he ran on toward the scene of the accident.

He knew nothing, of course, of the horseman who had pursued the coach, and who was now on the ledge whither the coach had fallen. He might have been more than ever ill at ease had he known it—for, where love is, jealousy finds a quick foothold.

Gid Gale paid no heed to the horses; though they were panting like steam engines and reeking with foam.

He rushed to the rim of the ledge, and looked down on the coach; and was startled by what he saw.

The girl had emerged from the damaged coach, and was speaking to the horseman. The lines by which the latter had descended, dangled against the rocky wall.

An involuntary cry came from the Gold-Camp Detective.

At this, the two on the ledge below, looked up; and the horseman gave a start of concern.

"Can I be of assistance?" Gid Gale questioned, lifting his hat and bowing to the young woman. "I feared the worst, but I see—"

"I was badly scared," she confessed. "A little bruised and shaken up, too! It's a wonder I wasn't killed!"

The words were hardly out of her mouth, before Gid Gale had grasped the lines and was swinging himself down the face of the rock.

"You shouldn't have done that!" said the horseman, with an almost imperceptible frown. "You could help us more on the ledge up there, than you can here. How to get this young lady up there, is what has been puzzling me!"

"Then, I'll go up with all speed!"

The girl nodded an assent; and Gid Gale, in spite of the stiffness and soreness that made every muscle groan and ache, climbed, hand-over-hand, back to the ledge.

The horseman followed him, shortly.

Then, more lines were procured from the horses; and, after much contriving and a considerable expenditure of strength, the girl, Miss Josie Farnall, was drawn up beside them.

CHAPTER III.

OLD SILVERTIP.

IN the composing room of the *Tangled Pine Bough*, a tramp compositor bent above his "case," slowly picked the letters from their boxes, and arranged them, with equal slowness, in the "stick."

Apparently, he was a "bum" of the most pronounced sort; and his appearance had already conferred on him the title of "Old Silvertip!"

A shock of gray hair straggled out from under a greasy hat; and a mass of beard, of the same color, disfigured, rather than adorned, his face. Except for this rough coating of hair, and his general shabby and shaggy locks, there was nothing about him of a bear-like character, such as would suggest the name of "Silvertip." He was mild-mannered and even retiring, seeming to prefer the darkest corners and most unobtrusive places.

He had only shown himself in Tangled Pine the previous day; and, with the custom of his class, had gone straight to the office of the *Bough* and asked for a "sit."

As the only compositor worthy of the name had left the office in a huff but a short time before, Old Silvertip was set to work; though, to judge by his snail-like movements in handling the "types," the "galley" were not likely to fill very rapidly under his manipulations.

The proprietor and editor of the paper, Mr. Basil Brown, a man upward of fifty, was seated at his desk, preparing "copy." But Brown had many matters to command his attention, aside from the conduct of the paper, and, when he had written a short time, he took up his hat and left the office.

The office being thus vacated by all save Old Silvertip, the manner of the latter underwent a marked change. The deferential and submissive air vanished; and into the eyes, which had heretofore been half-shut, came an expression of lively interest.

The old "bum" got off his stool, and hurried with quick steps to the window, and watched Basil Brown walk up the street and out of sight.

The ease with which he moved, quite as much as the brightness of the eyes, showed that the pretended tramp printer was a fraud of the first water.

The stoop of age came out of his back; the stiffness out of his limbs; and the eyes, now snapping and burning, began to peer about the interior of the office.

"I make a mighty poor stagger at work of this kind," was the muttered comment. "It'll soon be found out that I can't set type worth shucks, and I'll be bounced; so—"

and here he worked his face comically—"I'd better make hay while the sun shines."

He stepped, with much alacrity, to the desk where Basil Brown had been writing; lifted the lid, and began to rummage, with much haste, among a quantity of papers that littered the interior.

He could not find what he sought; and, when he was sure of this, he went back to his case, remounted the stool, and sat for a moment in thought.

Then he took up a bit of paper, pulled the stub of a pencil from his pocket, and scribbled these words, in a disguised hand:

"If Philip Concreve is in town and will communicate with me, all will be forgiven. I have information that will make his fortune."

"VERNA LYNDON."

He read this over two or three times to make sure he had written it as he desired, then proceeded to put it in type.

Basil Brown came back, after a time; and grumbled at the slow progress the new compositor was making. He was even wrathful. But the old bum only bent his head, picked type faster than ever, and said not a word in reply.

"At this rate, the *Tangled Pine Bough* will soon become a monthly!" Brown growled. "Confound the luck, anyway! Just when I need reliable help, I can't get it!"

Then he sat down at the desk again, wrote furiously for a few minutes; after which he once more took his way into the street.

A boy came in, after a while, and began to set type; but Old Silvertip scarcely gave him a look; and affairs seemed to have dropped into very quiet grooves; when there came an exclamation from the desk to which Brown had again returned.

All the matter "set up" that morning had been dumped into one galley; and Brown was staring at the proof, which the boy had just taken and handed to him.

The eye of the editor had fallen on the paragraph written and set up by Old Silvertip.

There was evidently something in it to give him an uncomfortable start. His face had whitened to a ghastly hue, and he was manifesting a marked degree of nervous fright.

"I want to see you a minute, Silvertip!" he commanded, in a harsh tone, rightly guessing that Old Silvertip had "set up" the offending notice.

The old man climbed slowly down from the stool, with many exhibitions of rheumatic tendencies, and limped painfully across to the editor's desk.

"Where did you get this?" Brown asked in the same harsh voice. "I never hung any such thing as this on the copy book."

He surveyed Silvertip with a glance that was as searching as the probe of a surgeon.

The old man held his greasy hat in his hand, and shifted uneasily under this look.

"A boy brought it in, sir. You wasn't here to receive it, and so I made bold—"

"A boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"What sort of a boy?"

"About so high!" and Silvertip measured with his hand a distance of four feet from the floor.

"H'm!"

Brown gave a grunt of displeasure.

"He paid for it, I presume?"

"Yes, sir, and here's the money," fumbling in his pockets for the change. "I didn't think to hand it to you before. I didn't know your rates, but he said fifteen cents a line; and so I took what he paid me!"

The tones were tremblingly deferential.

"Well, I'd have you know, old man, that I'm the editor of this little paper! I place on the copy book everything that I think proper to insert, and if I find you editing the concern again, I'll pitch you out of the window!"

"Yes, sir," said Silvertip. "I didn't know—"

"You've no business to know. All you've got to do is to stick in type what I give you!"

Silvertip bowed with his greasy hat in his hand; and Basil Brown turned to the desk, and recommenced the reading of the proof.

Seeing that the unpleasant interview was

over, the tramp printer shambled back to his case; from which point he now and then surveyed the editor with crafty eyes.

When the proof came back a thrill of pleasure passed through the heart of Old Silvertip; for he saw that the notice he had surreptitiously inserted had been marked out with heavy lines.

"He's my man!" the tramp muttered, bending over the case to conceal the feelings that thrilled him. "I thought it before; now I know it! When I tied up at Tangled Pine, I made no mistake!"

"Mr. Editor, you've had your say. One of these here fine days I'll have mine!"

CHAPTER IV.

CATCHING A TARTAR.

GID GALE, the Gold-Camp Detective, had been in the lively town of Tangled Pine a day or two, before Old Silvertip made his appearance, as above narrated.

Though Tangled Pine was a lively place, it was not so lively that the coming of Gid Gale had escaped attention.

He had been sighted, as soon as he entered the precincts of the camp; and he had been closely watched by several pairs of eyes, ever since.

Of course, the exciting incidents connected with the hold-up of the stage had not remained unknown, nor Gid Gale's participation in them; and, more than once, the Gold-Camp Detective was aware that he was being pointed out and discussed as one of the heroes of that occasion.

This did not please him; for he had hoped to enter Tangled Pine in an unobtrusive manner.

He had restored the young woman to her home uninjured. As for the horseman who had assisted in her rescue, he had refused to come on into the town; and Gid Gale was not sure he had seen him since.

He was quite sure he had not seen the horseman as the latter appeared at the time of that meeting on the stage trail; but he had beheld the face of one in Tangled Pine, whom he was half-inclined to believe the same individual.

And that one was a woman!

He had dropped in at a restaurant for a meal, and this woman had come forward to take his order. She was, in truth, the proprietor of the eating-house; and he learned, afterward, that she went by the name of Kansas Kate.

However, if Kansas Kate and the unknown horseman were one and the same, the horseman was disguised—or, Kansas Kate was now disguised!

As this last did not seem probable, Gid Gale, who could not rid himself of the belief that she had played the part of the horseman, decided that the disguise had been worn at that time.

There was much in the resemblance—more than a fancy! The features were remarkably alike. Of course, there was the difference in attire; and the horseman, though smooth-faced, had been very dark. There were other differences; enough to deceive other people; but Gid Gale flattered himself that he was an expert in such matters—and clung to the belief that had been forced on him.

Whether he was right or not will be seen later!

Two or three times he had caught sight of pretty Josie Farnall; and the desire was growing on him to call on her at her home. His thoughts hovered about her a great deal; and there could be no doubt that the love he had suffered to creep into his heart was making such a place for itself that it would become difficult, if not impossible, to dislodge it.

Of those who had marked the detective's entrance into the camp, Basil Brown was one. He had not thought much about the coming of this stranger, until after the finding of that singular notice in the "proof."

He did not suspect that it had been written by the tramp printer, himself. On the contrary, as he ruminated on the subject, his thoughts turned to Gid Gale.

"I know everybody that's come into the camp, the last few days!" he muttered, omitting Silvertip in the calculations. "Everybody but this man, Gideon Gale. Now what brought him here? He isn't a miner; he isn't a prospector;—nor a speculator! He isn't a anything, that I can see!"

"A man don't usually come to a camp like Tangled Pine just for the fun of the thing. Tangled Pine is not a pleasure resort. I guess I'll keep my eyes on that chap!"

And, in accordance with this decision, Basil Brown kept his eyes so closely on Gid Gale that he came to the conclusion that Gid Gale was the author of the notice that had so disturbed him.

It was a most unpleasant discovery, if it was a discovery; for Basil Brown knew that there was far more behind the words of that notice than any casual reader would guess. The memory of it made him suffer, hours afterward. It had been signed "Verna Lyndon;" and he knew, all too well for his own peace of mind, the wearer of that name.

When Basil Brown had reached this point, and had satisfied himself as well as he could that Gid Gale was the author of the startling notice, he made his way to a little office, that stood on the main street, only a door or two from the restaurant kept by Kansas Kate.

The building was a rough, unpainted affair, hastily slapped together, and the office was on the second floor.

A rickety stairway led to this floor; and, when he mounted it, Basil Brown stopped in front of a door, which bore on its surface the words:

"CITY MARSHAL."

Rapping, and being invited to enter, he walked into the office; and saw before him a man, with a large shaggy head, and ferret eyes set so closely together that they seemed to grudge the space assigned by nature for the nose.

This unprepossessing person was the city marshal; and he was apparently sufficiently well-muscled to cope with the most obstreperous vagabond that ever made night hideous.

Tom Travers, the Marshal of Tangled Pine, had been given his position because of his self-alleged fighting prowess. He called himself "The Terror from Tarantula;" though there were some unkind enough to insinuate that "tarantula juice"—otherwise the fieriest of liquors—was the only thing he had ever punished, and his love of it the only reason he could have for assuming the title.

On Tom Travers's face, graven as with a pen of steel, was written, over and over, the word "villain!" If he was not a rascal, at heart, then nature had been very unkind to him, in thus stamping his countenance.

Travers opened his mouth, in a huge grin of welcome, as Basil Brown sidled cautiously into the room.

"I'm as glad to see ye as if you was my grandmother!"

Then, with a sudden change of expression:

"Business, eh?"

Basil Brown sunk into a chair, and glanced quietly about the room.

"You've seen this stranger, Gid Gale?"

"K'rect!" said the Terror. "I've spotted him!"

"Who is he, and what is he?"

"If you'll ask something easy, mebbe I kin answer ye! In this case, blest if I know! Up at the hotel, he signs hisself 'Gideon Gale, of Chicago.' It's my opinion, he never seen that there burg!"

The Terror of Tarantula, who had never been away from his native mountains, fancied Chicago to be a great ways off—almost as far as China, or the moon.

"Well, I think I know what he's here for!" weighing his words out as carefully as if they were gems of gold. "He's come here to put his fingers on a man of about my size! I've had pretty straight proof of it, already!"

Travers opened his eyes in mute surprise.

"Yes, that's what I think! It's what I'm sure of!"

After making which statement, Brown proceeded, in a low tone, to give his reasons for thinking Gid Gale was not the innocent man he appeared.

It was all a revelation, and a most unpleasant revelation, to the Terror from Tarantula. He had fancied the stranger would bear watching; but had not thought danger was aimed at his chief.

For Basil Brown was really the marshal's chief—the man who directed him in his most vital acts.

"This is one of the things I counted on," Brown continued, "when I helped to get you your place. There's no man can work a scheme, of the sort I've planned, like the marshal of the camp. There's no other man who can go up to a stranger and take him in tow, under color of law!"

The Terror of Tarantula continued to stare. He did not see the drift of all this.

"I want you to walk up to him, at the first opportunity, on the pretense of arresting him as a suspicious character. You understand? I want you to do more than that! Be a little rough to him, and get him mad. Perhaps he'll draw his gun. If he does—"

"Down him, ye mean!"

"Certainly," and Brown nodded. "But you needn't publish it to the world, Travers. That voice of yours has the ring of a buzz-saw. A stranger would think you was talking to a man in the next county."

Travers flushed under this reprimand.

"The thing mayn't be so easy to work as it looks!" he protested, obediently lowering his tones. "If the fellow's quick with his gun, he may—"

"And you're the Terror from Tarantula!" sneeringly. "Where's the sand you always bragged of? Where's the bull-dog grit? Where's all that tigerish ferocity, that you used to always prate about?"

"It ain't that!" Travers growled. "Sand's good enough in its way, and I reckon I've got as much as I ever had. But the leetlest, teentiest kind of a kid, if he's only big enough to pull a trigger, could down a feller as big as old Sampson!"

"So you won't do it?"

"I didn't say that. Of course, I'll do it. I'll make a try fer the feller's meat, anyhow! You're dead sure you ain't mistaken in this business? You're dead sure that you've got a cause to want to pulverize this hyer gent?"

"Dead sure!"

This was so positive that the Terror could offer no further objections; and the plan was arranged whereby the end desired might be accomplished.

The result of this conference, in that upstairs room, was, that when Gid Gale came out of Kansas Kate's restaurant, shortly after dark that evening, the Terror of Tarantula walked up to him, laid a hand roughly on his shoulder, and tried to slip a pair of shining handcuffs on his wrists.

"Not if I know it, you don't!" cried the Gold-Camp Detective, snatching his hands away.

He knew he had done nothing to call for this, and his suspicions were aroused.

"You resist the arrest, do ye?" Travers snarled. "Resist the city marshal, do ye? That's what I am! Goin' to strike me, are ye?"

The questions were howled in a key that grew higher and higher.

And as he delivered them, shooting them out like balls from a repeating-rifle, he swung his heavy fist, intending to strike Gale in the face and disable him; and then finish him without further danger to himself.

The place where the encounter took place, although near Kansas Kate's establishment, was dark and ill-lighted—a fact of which Travers hoped to take advantage.

His actions could not be clearly seen by any one; therefore, no evilly-disposed person could testify that he had not acted exactly "white" in his treatment of the stranger.

The swinging fist missed its mark; and then the Terror's revolver leaped into view.

Just what occurred thereafter, Travers would have been puzzled to say. He knew he was seized in a pair of arms, whose grip was like iron; that he was lifted bodily from his feet; and that he came down on the hard ground, with a force sufficient to spangle the sky with more stars than any astronomer ever discovered with a far-reaching telescope.

Having seized him thus, and hurled him to the earth with almost the quickness of thought, the Gold-Camp Detective plucked away the big revolver. This he tossed into the adjacent alley. Then he grasped Travers by the shoulders, dragged him into the self same alley; and, when the Terror

came round, the detective stood above him, thrusting a revolver into the rascal's face.

"You're the city marshal of this camp, are you?" he hissed. "And, as city marshal, you leap on a stranger, in that style! You thought to catch me napping!"

"Now, I want to say a word to you, that you'll do well to bear in mind. I've been told that you're the Terror from Tarantula, and a shooter from Shootville! I want you to understand that none of these things scare me one cent; and that the next time you try to pick a quarrel with me, you will sincerely wish you hadn't."

"I'm a peaceable man, when I'm let alone. I know you were put up to do this job, for you can have nothing against me. Now, I'm going to let you go! Your revolver is in that alley. If you ever draw it on me again without cause, as you did to-night, I'll down you like I would a wolf!"

Having delivered himself of this, the Gold-Camp Detective turned his back on the prostrate and humiliated ruffian, and calmly took his way up the street, leaving Travers to find his revolver and search out Basil Brown, with the astounding report of what had befallen him in his attempt to carry out Brown's instructions.

CHAPTER V.

A RIDICULOUS SCENE.

It was destined to be an evening of adventures for Gid Gale, who, when he had disposed of the marshal, turned his face in the direction of the home of Josie Farnall.

He had meant to visit the home of the Farnalls when he emerged from Kansas Kate's; and only the Terror's interference had kept him from going in that direction sooner.

A series of inquiries had informed him that the Farnall family consisted of Josie, of her father, Sam Farnall, and of a muscular and somewhat idiotic dandy, known to local fame as Beebe Small.

Sam Farnall was a miner, and the proprietor of a very promising "prospect," which he had christened the Heather Bell Mine. With the small means he could command, Farnall was endeavoring to develop this property; but for some reason, unknown to the detective's informant—but presumably because of a lack of funds—the development of the mine did not go on very rapidly.

Having learned all this, and in so doing having become mentally acquainted with the family, Gid Gale turned his steps in the course so often trodden in his thoughts, resolved on again seeing the young woman who had occupied so much of his mind since his advent into the gold camp.

The house occupied by the Farnalls was a small cottage, on the outskirts of the town, within convenient distance of the Heather Bell Mine. There was not much attempt at ornamentation; though flowers—dear to the heart of almost every woman—bloomed in the windows.

From these windows lights shone, as Gid Gale turned into the well worn path. The lights also streamed into the corridor, revealing its interior, for the front door was open; and the detective's heart warmed under the influence of the home-like air of the scene.

The detective walked up to the door, with the intention of knocking, when he beheld Miss Josie come into the full flood of light in the corridor.

At her side Beebe Small pranced, rather than walked; and Gale could see that Beebe was making ineffectual attempts to get hold of her hand.

The detective would have withdrawn, and was, in fact, about to retreat.

Just then Beebe, unable to clasp the unwilling hand of the young woman, cast himself dramatically at her feet, clasped his palms together imploringly, and rolled his big, watery eyes up at her face.

It was so ridiculous a scene that Gid Gale could have laughed outright.

Beebe Small was arrayed in a manner quite as remarkable as his actions. Gorgeous plaids adorned his person; a flaming scarf was knotted at his throat, matching well in hue the color of his face, and pointed, tan shoes incased his feet.

Otherwise, Beebe was broad-shouldered and athletic in appearance, with a ponderous

nose, big eyes, and a diminutive forehead which lost itself in a shock of light hair.

Beebe regarded himself as a very superior sort of young man, and an exceptional "catch" for any modern daughter of Eve; and it was past his comprehension how this young woman could so steadily resist his advances.

He fancied himself madly in love with Josie Farnall. His bosom heaved for her during the day and sobbed for her throughout the long hours of the night. He thought of her while awake, and dreamed of her while asleep. She was as the apple of his eye! The one beautiful rose in the world's garden of girls!

That was what Beebe thought; and thinking thus, he had plied Miss Farnall with his attentions, in and out of season until she fairly wearied of him.

Still, because he was a member of the family, she strove to treat him with reasonable respect.

But respect was not what Beebe wanted;—respect was a thing he scorned, when coming from her; and he declared to himself, with many solemn asseverations, that only her love could satisfy him.

He had been hovering about her all evening, whispering his bits of idiotic nonsense, to Josie's great disgust; and now, to cap the climax, he indulged in the spectacular performance of throwing himself at her feet.

The trouble with Beebe Small was that he was a fool; and, like most persons similarly afflicted, he did not know it.

"Don't make an idiot of yourself, Beebe!" Josie adjured. "It seems to me you're getting sillier and sillier!"

"Promise me, then! Promise me!" he wailed. "Give me just one word!"

"I will promise you nothing," she declared, turning from him in a high dungeon!

And, just then, she caught sight of the Gold-Camp Detective, who was discreetly and quietly trying to beat a retreat.

She grew red as a peony, and took a quick step toward the door.

Beebe Small saw that her attention had been attracted, glanced in the same direction, and colored such a crimson that the blood seemed starting from his face.

"I—I beg pardon—" Gid Gale stammered, feeling the extreme awkwardness of the situation.

"You were about to knock?" she questioned. "Come in, please! Mr. Gale, allow me to present you to—"

She was in a flutter of excitement; and stopped, gaspingly, when she saw that Beebe Small was beating a retreat.

Beebe had clambered instantly to his feet, turned his back on the doorway, and was already passing out at the corridor's further end.

Floundering vainly for further words, she led the way into the small parlor.

She put away the detective's hat; and, when she came back, he hastened to turn the conversation to the incidents of the stage journey and of her miraculous escape from the fall on the ledge.

At this she brightened, and, as her nervousness passed away, the conversation grew exceedingly lively and interesting.

Gid Gale could see all the while, however, that she was thinking of the ridiculous scene in the corridor. He could also see that she was anxious to explain it, yet hesitated; and, though he was equally anxious to hear the explanation, not a word was said by either on the subject.

Still, Gid Gale enjoyed immensely this evening spent at the Farnall Home; and mentally promised himself many similar evenings, if opportunity came.

It came, when he arose to go: in the shape of an invitation to call again.

How soon he was to be back in the house he did not dream.

As he stepped away from the building, a fierce dog rushed on him, from the covert of a clump of trees, and attacked him with great vindictiveness.

Even in the excitement and peril of the moment, Gid Gale fancied that he heard some one hiss the dog on to the assault.

He struck out viciously with his feet, striving to hold the savage brute at bay, and was about to draw a revolver for the purpose of shooting it; when Josie Farnall, attracted by the noise, hurried to his rescue.

"You, Nero!" she shouted. "Down, sir! What do you mean by that?"

Regardless of the peril in which she might be placed, she rushed upon the angry brute and grasped him by the collar.

Her touch more than her words had a quieting effect; and, when she shouted at him again, Nero retreated; though he still snarled and showed his teeth.

The dog's teeth had cut through the sleeve of the detective's coat and entered his left arm above the wrist.

The wound was bleeding profusely; and, on Josie's invitation, he went back into the house that a bandage might be secured and applied.

She got the bandage and some liniment; and was so deft and soft-fingered, when she applied the bandage and poured the liniment on the wound, that Gale almost felt he would like to be bitten by a dozen dogs, if he could be assured of such attentions, on each occasion, from this handsome young woman.

She apologized for Nero's brutal conduct; and was much exercised over the mysterious manner in which he had escaped from his chain.

Gid Gale recalled the hissing sound he had heard from the bushes, but held his peace. He knew that that hissing had come from the lips of Beebe Small; and, knowing that, he was sure Beebe had released the dog for the express purpose of urging him to the attack.

Was [Beebe Small growing jealous of the Gold-Camp Detective? It looked that way.

CHAPTER VI.

IN HOT QUARTERS.

It was yet early, when Gid Gale left the Farnall residence this second time; and, when he turned from the gate into the path that led to the town, he was not pleased to see Basil Brown.

Brown passed him; went in at the self-same gate, and walked on to the house.

The face of the Gold-Camp Detective darkened.

"Is there any meaning to that?" he questioned. "That is the man I want to shadow! If I'm not greatly mistaken, and I don't think I am, it's the man I shall shortly arrest!"

Thus thinking, he turned about, left the path, and walked back to the fence.

As he did this, Beebe Small came through the gate; and, catching sight of the detective standing there in that hesitating manner, he came toward him.

"See that man?" queried Beebe, jerking his thumb over his shoulder in the direction taken by Brown. "Richest man in town! Wants Josie! Can't have her! I'll settle him!"

Then he hurried on, muttering to himself; and was quickly lost to view.

"That Beebe Small is the biggest fool in ten States!" the detective thought, following Beebe with his eyes.

He did not feel kindly toward Beebe, because of the attack of the dog; and he wondered what Beebe meant, when he said he'd settle Brown and then started off in the direction opposite to that which Brown had taken.

There was food for thought, too, in Beebe's other breathless ejaculations. They told the detective that Basil Brown, the richest man in Tangled Pine, was a suitor for the hand of Josie Farnall.

This was not pleasant; and the detective knitted his brows, as he stood there by the fence, still undecided as to what he should do.

"No, I'll not go up to the house," he finally muttered. "I'll not sneak around the home of Josie Farnall! But I'm going to shadow that man. I'll just wait till he comes out!"

There was a possibility, of course, that Brown might leave by some other path; but the detective considered the possibility a remote one, and so remained on guard near the fence.

He drew further back, however, for he was not at all anxious that any one should see him lingering in the vicinity.

Brown spent about a half-hour in the house, and then came down the walk.

Gid Gale would have given a great deal to know just what took place during that interview. He was sure Brown had called on Josie. Had she received him kindly, or otherwise?"

But the detective could not know this; and he strove not to think about it, as he cautiously shadowed Brown on the way back to town.

Fortunately for Gale's purpose, Brown did not enter the principal street of Tangled Pine; but took a narrow, side street, which was little more than an alley, and which led by a more direct route to Brown's residence.

This was a big house, set on a hill, like a city that would not be hid.

Brown went straight home; and, as the darkness was more intense in the narrow street, Gid Gale kept close at his heels until he saw the man enter his home and vanish from view.

"Not much, out of that bit of 'piping,' so far!" was the detective's mental comment. "Goes home, like a peaceable man; and, I suppose, like a peaceable man, will now go to bed!"

However, some strange fascination held him near the house; and, after a time, when he saw a light flash in an upper room, he swung himself over the fence and drew nearer the building.

There was an outer stairway, leading to the second floor; and the detective's instinct being now strangely aroused, Gid Gale mounted the stairway with great stealth.

When he had mounted to the second floor, he let himself into a corridor, the door of which was ajar.

In many respects, it was an unfortunate performance. Brown came forward, at about the same instant; and the detective, casting about for some means of escape, scudded into another room, that led him toward the rear of the house.

He began to feel that his situation was precarious and unenviable. His curiosity had driven him too far. It was not likely that anything was to be discovered. Yet the chances were great that, under similar circumstances, he would do the same thing again.

When he set out to shadow a man, he cast aside considerations of himself, and many of the finer instincts of honor, and followed where his nose led, like a hound on the scent.

For a minute or two, after Brown disappeared, Gid Gale remained quietly in the place to which he had fled, thinking of what he would do.

Coming to the conclusion, finally, that Brown had left the house, and that he had nothing to gain by remaining there longer, he was about to creep back to the corridor, with the intention of making a quiet descent, when a light flashed over the grounds.

An odor of burning timber was also wafted to him; and a stir below told him that the inmates of the house were being aroused.

The sounds of confusion increased, the light glared brighter and brighter, and the odor grew more pungent and overpowering.

Gid Gale realized what had occurred, and gave a gasp of dismay. He was in a trap. The building was on fire, and the bright illumination of the grounds would prevent him from making his escape without discovery.

"This is a pretty how-do-do!" he ejaculated, striving to peer from one of the windows, and at the same time under the necessity of keeping himself screened from the view of any one who might look up at the house.

What he saw made him more nervous than ever.

A fire, that had apparently been smoldering for some time, eating its way within the interior of the house like a hidden cancer, had finally broken bounds; and, now, it was roaring like a young volcano, sending up a dense column of smoke and throwing its fiery light far out into the gloom of the night.

"I'm in a fix, sure!" was his thought; and he passed his hands nervously through his hair, while the perspiration began to ooze from his face.

"The chances are about ten to one that if I make my appearance, now, I will be thought the one who started the thing."

That he might be taken for a "fire-bug" was not pleasant; and he began to set his wits to work to contrive a way of escape.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DEED OF A FOOL.

If Gid Gale could have followed the movements of Beebe Small, when the latter departed from him, after delivering those dramatic exclamations, he would not have been puzzled to account for the cause of the fire.

Beebe was wild with rage. His hatred of the man who, he thought, was trying to rob him of the woman he loved, was intense and overpowering.

"I'll settle him!" he had said of Brown; and, to carry this threat into immediate execution, he had hurried away from the Farnall residence.

He was resolved that Basil Brown should not remain at the house and bask in the smiles of Josie Farnall; and his foolish brain had conjured up a hasty plan to draw Brown away.

This was nothing less than the firing of Brown's residence.

He knew that a fire in his home would cause Brown to beat a quick retreat; and this was the only thing Beebe could think of that promised to accomplish his purpose.

Beebe Small approached the residence of Basil Brown with much caution; and made his way up the stairway, mounted by the detective some time afterward.

He only did this, however, to gain access to the building. He did not remain above stairs; but, soon afterward, descended to the lower rooms of the house, and sought for a secure place in which to start his incendiary fire.

He had some cotton waste and matches in his pocket, obtained at the Farnall residence and brought for the purpose.

He was forced to work with much carefulness, for there were servants moving about; and Beebe Small was the last man in the world to want to be caught engaged in such a job.

A small space, resembling a closet, set in one of the back rooms of the lower part of the house, was the point of Beebe's attack. This space seemed to be devoted to odds and ends of rubbish; and there was little likelihood of its being visited by any one.

Hence, in selecting it, Beebe felt comparatively safe; and set about his criminal task with great deliberation.

All the while his thoughts were on Basil Brown and Josie Farnall. They were riotous, angry thoughts, too; that burned and hissed in his brain, like writhing and fiery serpents.

His rage constantly grew, as he suffered these thoughts to torture him; and he would as willingly have placed a knife in the heart of Basil Brown as to have proceeded with his present work, if the chance had then come.

What little sense this foppish young fellow had was smothered by his fierce rage. He had not a strong intellect, even when at his best. Selfishness and egotism were his predominant traits. Add to these an utter lack of conscience, and the materials are at hand for a first-class villain.

Beebe ground his teeth, angrily, as he arranged the cotton waste to his satisfaction, and cautiously scratched a match to set the heap on fire.

When he had applied the match, the waste did not leap up in a greedy flame, as he had anticipated, but burned slowly and smolderingly.

The cramped space picked out by Beebe Small was but poorly ventilated, and the air was foul, so that the fire promised to make but little headway.

Beebe found a piece of paper, which he placed on the floor, to shield his knees from contact with the dirt. Then he got down very gingerly, and proceeded to encourage the flame by blowing his breath against it.

The fire responded, by leaping up with more energy, and soon Beebe Small had a very respectable conflagration going on in the closet-like place, and the smoke became too stifling for his lungs.

Much time had been consumed in making his way from the residence of the Farnalls, and in getting the fire in good running order; and Beebe was in a hurry to have the fire break out and draw Basil Brown homeward,

In fancy, he saw Brown racing, at break-neck speed, across the commons; and his small soul gloated, and his watery eyes rolled in half-idiotic glee.

"I'll show him a thing or two!" he muttered, rubbing his hands together. "He thinks Beebe Small a fool; but Beebe Small knows how to get even with his enemies. Beebe Small knows how to strike back when he's hit. You bet!"

He retreated to a place that was less choked with smoke, and from this point of vantage watched the fire, as it grew in volume and intensity, rolling his eyes the while, and chuckling with glee over the manner in which he was about to get even with Basil Brown.

But the fire burned slowly, and many minutes elapsed before it ate through the encompassing walls and flared out on the night.

Beebe Small remained in his position, thinking himself secure there, and watched until the flames ate their way out; then he thought him that it was time to leave the place, if he hoped to escape discovery.

But in tarrying thus, Beebe Small overreached himself.

The flames flared up the inner stairway, as well as out into the night, seeming to fling themselves upward in a tremendous burst, and the incendiary found the way of escape blocked against him.

He paled as he made this discovery.

Seemingly, the only method by which he could get out of the house was by ascending to the story above, and taking another stairway, which he knew led to the ground, at the other end of the building.

But he observed—that what had likewise been observed by Gid Gale—that the light of the flames was illuminating the grounds, in a most distressing manner, and he was forced to the conclusion that he too was in a trap.

Even as this became plain to him, the sounds made by the aroused servants reached his ears.

Though the fire was swirling up the stairway, the stairway itself was not burning. This stairway offered Beebe his only means of escape; and he made a wild dash for it, heedless of the flames.

He succeeded in mounting it, without injury to his person or clothing, a thing he could not have done a minute later; and then stood in the upper corridor, hesitating and undecided.

This momentary indecision was caused by the sound of feet bounding up the back stairway—the stairway by which he had meant to let himself to the ground and out to safety.

Beebe Small paled still more, and caught his breath, in a sudden spasm of fear.

"I shall be caught, after all!" was his thought.

And thus thinking, he ran along, in the corridor, toward the rear of the building, nerving himself; for he fancied he would be forced to leap from one of the upper windows.

He approached one of these windows; but drew back, his fear increasing, when he saw how light the grounds were. He almost fancied it was light enough out there to enable any one to pick up a pin.

He sunk against the wall, groaning in his despair; and then he saw Basil Brown come into view.

There was such a look of anxiety on Brown's face that, for the moment, Beebe felt repaid for what he had done, and for the risks he still ran.

"The old scamp!" he whispered, shaking his fist at Brown. "To try to steal Josie away from me! And he old enough to be her grandfather!"

Brown was hardly as old as Beebe intimated; yet he was a man far past his maturity. Beebe knew, however, that, even senile old age, when it angles with a golden hook, often catches the most desirable fish in the matrimonial sea.

Brown passed almost instantly from sight; and Beebe Small again gave his mind to the task of extricating himself from his dilemma.

He had not the courage to leap from the window; knowing that he was sure to be seen, and also pretty certain that he would be hurt by the fall.

So he backed away from the light; and,

finding some unoccupied rooms, he began to make his way slowly through them.

Tripping once or twice, he began to feel that there might be pitfalls for his feet, and so got down on his hands and knees. Only a few minutes before he had been fastidiously careful. His fears now drove away all such feelings; and he crept along, heedless of the dirt that he knew was adhering to his gorgeous plaids.

Turning thus an angle of the wall, he bumped his head, with much force, against another head, that was approaching from the opposite direction; and, before he could quite comprehend what had occurred he felt himself seized by a pair of strong hands.

The owner of that other head and of those hands was Gid Gale, the Gold-Camp Detective.

Gid Gale had been in quite as great a predicament. How to get out of the house without discovery he did not know, nor could he ascertain.

The movements of the servants had disturbed him as they had disturbed Beebe Small; and he had been moving with nervous caution, seeking for what he could not find, when his head came in contact with Beebe's.

A startled exclamation from Beebe's lips told Gid Gale who this unknown was; and, though he was much astonished at the information thus conveyed, he clasped the young man in a still tighter grasp, and would not let him go.

Only a great fear kept Beebe from bawling for help.

"Who are you?" Beebe questioned, striving to free himself. "Are you one of the servants? I—I—"

"It's none of your business," Gale replied, in so altered a tone that Beebe did not recognize it. "You're the villain that set fire to this building!"

As he said it, and before Beebe knew what Gale intended to do, he snapped a pair of handcuffs on the young man's wrists, thus effectually blocking further resistance.

CHAPTER VIII.

OLD SILVERTIP TO THE FORE.

THE fire at the residence of Basil Brown was seen from the streets of Tangled Pine, and the fire-alarm immediately sounded.

Tangled Pine boasted of a first-class fire company; and in a remarkably short time, the trained fire-horses were in the main thoroughfare, thundering with the engine toward the scene of the conflagration.

The noise of the racing horses and the thumping wheels drew Old Silvertip into the street. From what obscure corner he came would have been hard to determine; but he made his appearance near the restaurant of Kansas Kate.

His eyes turned in the direction of the fire; and, when he saw that the burning house was Basil Brown's, a queer look rested on his features.

"All things are laid bare by a fire!" he muttered, and a thrill of excitement seemed to shake him.

The gong of the fire-engine was sounding, near at hand.

Old Silvertip turned toward it with a questioning glance.

"My chance!" was his thought, looking from the engine to the house. "All things are laid bare by a fire!"

And, thus muttering, he ran into the street, with remarkable agility for one of his apparent years; and swung, with almost the lightness of youth, to the fire-engine, as it roared by.

"Get off of there!" one of the firemen shouted, waving a hand, commandingly.

The old man only grinned, amiably, and clung to his perch.

The motion of the engine was terrific. The street was rough; and the wheels bounced and thumped in a way that was far from pleasant.

It was all the firemen could do to cling to their seats; and the one who had shouted so commandingly to Old Silvertip did not venture to climb to the point where the vagabond was sitting; to have done this would have pleased him, no doubt, but the task looked entirely too difficult.

Other members of the fire company yelled

at the old man; but he only grinned, as before, and clung to his place.

There was no time to stop the horses and force him to get down; so he was, perforce, permitted to remain.

He disappeared, however, from view of the members of the company, when the fire was gained; and was not seen by them again during the remainder of the evening.

Old Silvertip had not risked so much to gain the home of Basil Brown in a hurry, that night, to waste his time in fighting the fire.

The yard and grounds were filling with men, and the air was rent with excited orders, and the confused babel of sounds usually heard in a small city on such occasions. There seemed to be as many commanders as men!

Every one was hurrying hither and thither, in a seemingly idiotic fashion, no one apparently paying any heed to his fellow; so that Old Silvertip found it not difficult to gain access to the house, without attracting observation.

When he had accomplished this, he made his way up-stairs, by means of a stairway that the fire had not touched; and went, with all speed, to Basil Brown's private apartment.

The fire was still confined to the wing of the building in which it had been started; and, as the general attention was centered on that portion of the house, the old man found his way unobstructed.

Going into Brown's room, he cautiously closed and locked the door behind him; after which he proceeded, with some show of nervousness, to run hastily through the drawers of Brown's secretary.

He had searched the drawers in the writing-desk that was stationed in the office of the *Tangled Pine Bough*; and he was now making a similar search here.

When he did not find what he was seeking, he took the drawers out, one by one, placed them on the floor, and made a more careful inspection of their contents.

Seemingly, he did not discover the thing for which he was hunting; for he uttered many exclamations of impatience and disappointment.

He appeared to be in no hurry to leave the room. One of its windows commanded a fair view of the grounds, and of the men swarming therein like laboring ants.

However, when he saw the fire had been practically extinguished, he left the room, intending to make his way to the lower floor, to mingle with the crowd and thus escape.

But, when he had got out into the corridor, he changed his mind, and walked quickly toward the rear of the building.

All pretensions of age had been cast aside. He believed himself unobserved, and so thought not of caution.

But he was brought to a quick realization of the fact that walls may have eyes and ears, and even hands!

A pair of hands clutched him, as he hurried through the darkness; and, an instant later, the fierce light of a bull's-eye lantern put him quite out of countenance.

The old man cowered, shivering as if struck by a cold blast; and winked and blinked helplessly, under the blaze of the bright light that was searching out every lineament of his face.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" came in the voice of Gid Gale. "I thought it was some one else; and that I'd better knock him down with the light of this lantern, and make a bolt of it, while I could! But if it's you—"

At the same moment, the light was shut off, leaving Old Silvertip in such intense darkness that he could not have beheld his own hands.

He had recognized the voice of Gid Gale, however; though Gid Gale's words somewhat mystified him.

But the old man calmed the tremor that shook him; and became, seemingly, as cool as a cucumber.

"Why are you here?" he demanded.

"Are you the fire-bug?"

"Why are you?" came the instantaneous reply. "Are you the fire-bug?"

"Narry!" said Old Silvertip.

"Nor I! I'm here, because my legs brought me!"

"The same!" Silvertip ejaculated, with a chuckle.

The Gold-Camp Detective drew the old man further back into the room.

"Perhaps we'd better come to an understanding. Here are three men, in the upper part of this house—in the uninhabited, back portion, you understand!—either of whom would be taken for the fire-bug, if seen. I'm one of the men, you're another, and Beebe Small is the third. What does it mean?"

Old Silvertip gasped his surprise, and seemed on the point of saying something; but he closed his lips firmly, and endeavored to still the trembling that possessed him.

"What does it mean?" the detective repeated.

"I'm blest if I know!" the old man was forced to reply. "All I know is, that I want to get out of here. I was trying for that, when you blinded me. I reckon there's a stairway, somewhere around?"

Gid Gale saw that the old man was attempting evasion. Silvertip was concealing something. He had his own suspicions concerning the old man; but these suspicions were, as yet, extremely vague and shadowy.

"If you'll let me go on," Silvertip pleaded, anxious to escape the detective's questioning.

"Certainly," said Gale. "Only I thought maybe you'd like to interview Beebe Small!"

The old man's desire to get away increased. Perhaps he recalled the fact that the firemen were leaving.

"No, no!" he exclaimed.

And, then, seeing that the detective did not mean to interpose, he fled back, by the way he had come, and vanished.

When Silvertip had disappeared, Gid Gale, who was becoming likewise desirous of making an escape from the building, walked into the adjacent room. Into this room he had thrust Beebe Small; and he was somewhat astonished, now, when he found it vacant.

He had thought to remove the handcuffs from Beebe's wrists; for he had no desire to hold the young man as a prisoner, and charge him with being an incendiary.

But Beebe was gone, supposedly taking the handcuffs with him.

The detective had not anticipated this. He had relied on the belief that Beebe would not wish to appear among his friends and acquaintances wearing those ornaments.

"Well, he is gone!" the detective mused. "I suppose I ought to be imitating his example, at this minute. And, I will!"

And forthwith he proceeded to let himself out of the house.

The fire was subdued, the excitement was over, and the crowd was dispersing. Gid Gale could not tarry there longer, with any safety.

CHAPTER IX.

TRAVERS SEES HIS OPPORTUNITY.

BEEBE SMALL was in a paroxysm of fright, when clutched by the detective; and this did not decrease when he felt the cold steel on his wrists.

He replied to Gid Gale's questions, tremblingly, and with many falsehoods and evasions. Sure that Gale was aware of the part just played by him, he was still not willing to admit his guilt.

He recalled, with terror, the hasty and angry words spoken by him to Gale, near the garden gate. Those words, and his discovery in Brown's house under such suspicious circumstances, would be enough to convict him.

His hate had burned against Brown, and now it flared up against the detective.

He did not know, of course, that Gale was a detective. He knew him as the man who had assisted in saving Josie from her perilous position on the ledge; and he feared that Gale was to become a suitor for Miss Josie's hand.

He tried to think the situation over, after Gale had thrust him into the other room. But he was not gifted in that line. Calm reflection was a thing beyond his power. He could only rage and fume, in a blind way.

And, thus raging and fuming, with his hate against Gale constantly growing, he began to wonder if it would not be possible to make it seem that Gale was the fire-bug. Circumstances pointed to Gale, as strongly as to himself.

He could not make out what Gale was doing in that upper room; and, puzzling over this, he began to tug at the handcuffs on his wrists.

He could not release himself; but, as his feet were still free, there was nothing to hinder him from making his way out of the house.

He was about to put this thought into execution, when he heard Gale's words to Silvertip, and saw the light of the bull's-eye illuminate the old man's face.

The mystery thus presented strongly attracted Beebe's curiosity. He listened to the words that were spoken, and endeavored to set them down in his memory.

When he heard his own name pronounced, he felt that it was time to go, if he meant to go at all; and, slipping softly out of the room, he hurried to the nearest stairway, and descended to the ground.

He was mortally afraid the handcuffs would be discerned by some one. He had no reply ready, in such an event; and so he tried to avoid observation, and walked hurriedly toward the fence, beyond which the shadows lay heavily.

When he had climbed over the fence and began to feel secure, he broke into a run, which carried him rapidly toward the town.

The plan of action he had outlined, he was now desirous of carrying into effect.

He meant to go straight to the office of the city marshal, tell him what had occurred, and ask to be released from the handcuffs. He meant, also, to tell his story in such a way that the guilt of the incendiary fire would be laid at the door of Gid Gale.

The streets were filled with people, and Beebe was forced to dodge and sidle through alleys, and adopt a variety of devices, to keep the handcuffs from being seen.

However, no one appeared to notice him; and he finally succeeded in reaching Travers's office.

Travers was not in, much to Beebe's discomfort; and, not knowing what else to do, he retreated to the street, and waited, in the dark shadows of the alley, for the coming of the marshal.

He was there about an hour, and a most unpleasant hour it was. His thoughts ran from fear to rage, and back again, in a painful way. Consumed by jealousy and hate, he raged against Gale and Brown; and even began to harbor some bitterness of feeling against the woman he thought he loved.

Travers came at last; and, when he had entered his office Beebe stole from his place of concealment and once more mounted the stairway.

Travers was lighting the office lamp, when Beebe's timid knock was heard; and, when he had commanded the knocker to come in, and Beebe appeared with the handcuffs on his wrists, the Terror of Tarantula stared in dumb amazement.

"Well!" was all he could ejaculate.

"Can you get them off?" was Beebe's trembling question.

"I'd like to know, first, how in Sam Hill they got on there! Looks as if you'd been arrested by somebody!"

The marshal's tones were loud; and Beebe discreetly closed the door, lest they should reach the street.

"It's a long story!" said Beebe. "Take the things off, please and I'll tell you all about it!"

"My, they're beauties!" Travers declared, eying them with professional pride. "Shine like they were made out of silver! Where did you git 'em?"

"Take them off, first, please!" Beebe again implored.

"Don't know if I've got a key that'll fit!" and the Terror took a well-loaded key-ring from his pocket and began to run over the keys. "Here's keys for handcuffs galore! Ah! Let's try this one."

With the word, he applied the key, and the handcuffs came off.

Beebe gave a great sigh of relief.

"Do you want to take 'em with you as a keepsake?"

"No!" and Beebe shuddered. "I don't want to see 'em again!"

"Very well; set down in that chair, and sing out your story! Them handcuffs have got a history I know."

"Lock the door, will you?"

"Very private and p'tickler, eh?" com-

plying, also, with this request. "This is gittin' as interestin' as a play! Two or three times, Beebe, I've told you that you'd snarl yourself up, one of these days; and now you have!"

"Oh, it wasn't done as you think!" Beebe protested. "Not in that way, at all!"

He sunk into a chair, and looked the marshal full in the face.

"I was up at the fire, awhile ago; and, thinking I could save some of the things in the upper rooms, I went up there!"

"And fell into them bracelets?"

"Who do you suppose was up there?" Beebe went on. "Nobody, but this fellow, Gid Gale; that sneaked into the town a few days ago!"

The Terror gave a snort of surprise.

"He was up there hiding! What do you suppose he was doing that for? I stumbled on to him, in one of the rooms; and, before I knew it, he put these things on me!"

Travers rubbed his nose, reflectively.

He was ready to believe that there were some "holes" in Beebe's story; for he was pretty well acquainted with the young man; and knew that, in all things, Beebe could not be relied on.

"It looks like he set the house afire, and went up there to hide, don't it?" Beebe questioned.

"Who said the house was set afire?"

Beebe flushed, under the marshal's keen scrutiny.

"Why I—I—heard it in the streets!"

"Well, go on with your story," Travers urged.

"I asked this man what he was doing up there, and hinted that I thought he had started the fire; and then he slapped the handcuffs on me! I don't know what he meant to do, after that; for I took leg-bail, and got away as quick as I could. Then, I came straight here; and—"

He hesitated, seeing how closely the marshal was watching him.

Travers was lost, for a moment, in thought.

"I think you're right," he finally said. "Gid Gale is the very rascal that set that house on fire; and I'm obliged to you fer comin' hyer and tellin' me of it!"

"But, hark ye, Beebe! don't you breathe a word of this to another livin' soul! You hear? Don't even dream about it, while you're asleep! The time may come when you'll be called up before a jury, an' asked to tell what you know about it—an' the less you say, now— Why, you know, you're likely to get your stories tangled; and that's why I want you to be careful!"

"If the thing should come before a jury— mebbe it might come before a jury of Judge Lynch!" and he gave Beebe a sly look. "I want to coach you as to how you should tell it! So you wouldn't git tangled up by any cross-questions, you understand!"

Beebe nodded; though the marshal's words and actions made him uneasy.

"I'll keep still about it," he promised. "And now, what would you advise me to do?"

"Go home, and go to bed! And tomorrow, say as little about the fire as you kin!"

The advice seemed so good, that Beebe proceeded to act on it.

When he had left the office, Travers corrugated his heavy brow, and strode up and down the room for several minutes, in anxious thought.

"That there was a lie—jist about the whole of it!" he muttered. "But, sometimes, lies serve about as well as the truth! In this hyer case, it'll serve fully as well!"

"That there Beebe has got it in for Gale; and he's the identical chap that started the fire. What in Sam Hill Gid Gale was a-doin' in the house, though—if he was in the house—gits me!"

"He must have put the bracelets on Beebe, though. If Beebe wasn't such an infernal liar!"

There were good and abundant reasons why the Marshal of Tangled Pine did not wish to hold Beebe Small to account too strictly. Beebe knew a thing or two, which he might tell to the public, to the great disadvantage of the Terror of Tarantula.

"It's my duty, as marshal of this hyer camp, to tell Brown of this!" he thought,

a hypocritical smile lighting his face. "Brown wants to do up this man Gale; and I calc'late that the climate would be healthier fer me, if Gale is hurried out of the way."

"Fire-bugs don't have a lovely time of it, in Tangled Pine; when it's known that they air fire-bugs!"

"Yes, I'll tell Brown!"

And, having come to a conclusion, the marshal let himself out into the street, filled with this righteous determination.

CHAPTER X.

BEEBE GETS A FALL.

THE excitement of the night had quite overcome Beebe Small's weak intellect; and, when he walked down the stairway, he scarcely saw which way he was going, or knew what he was doing.

In fancy, he still felt the cold grip of the handcuffs on his wrists, beheld the flashing of the bull's-eye, caught the roar of the flames and the shouts of the firemen, and heard the talk between Silvertip and Gid Gale.

In addition to all this, the words of Travers still rung in his ears; and Travers's suspicious glances still pierced him through and through.

Therefore, it is not to be wondered at, that he paid little heed to the steps he was taking.

In consequence of this, he caught his toe in a broken board, when half-way down the stairs, and was precipitated, heavily. His head struck a sharp corner of the banister; and, with a moan, he rolled to the ground, in an unconscious condition.

As he came thus sliding down, bumping from step to step, he was seen; and a group of men quickly gathered about him. It was an outer stairway, built thus to save room; for most of the houses in Tangled Pine were small and cramped.

Beebe was picked up from the ground, and carried, in an insensible condition, into Kansas Kate's restaurant, which was near; and help being there summoned, he was borne into a back bedroom and placed on a cot.

Kansas Kate was not in the house; but before Beebe had recovered his senses, she came in.

She whitened strangely, when she heard what had occurred; and in an agitated manner hurried into the bedroom.

Beebe's eyes were fluttering and his chest heaving.

"Do you think he will die?" she panted, turning to those about the bed.

"I think not, mum," said a rough shirted miner. "Dunno, of course; but I think not. He fell like a rock; and he's got a cut there, on his head. We've been wonderin' if we hadn't orter send fer the doctor?"

"Leave him to me!" she commanded, motioning to the others to go out of the room. "I'll try to bring him round. If I see I can't I'll have you fetch a doctor."

Then she shouted for more cloths and more water, and, when these were brought, she barred the door against all intruders, and set about her work of restoration with considerable skill.

The news of Beebe's fall and injury spread through the camp, and were discussed; though they were not of sufficient moment to still the talk of the fire.

A general belief was growing that the fire was the work of an incendiary, and little knots of men were grouped on the corners of the streets with their heads bent closely together.

Travers, coming out of his office, approached one of these groups, and for the first time became aware of what had befallen Beebe.

He was on the point of hastening to Kansas Kate's, when he beheld Basil Brown coming down the street, and hurried toward him.

"Come into my office a minute," he whispered. "I want to speak to you."

Brown nodded, and then continued on down the street, giving no further attention to Travers—in fact, acting as if he had had no communication with that individual.

Brown was a well known figure on the thoroughfares of Tangled Pine, and he naturally attracted more attention now, since the incident of the fire.

A dozen men hailed him, to ask what damage had been done, and if he had any idea how the fire started.

Brown was evasive, though he now and then shook his head, wisely, to indicate that he knew a great deal more than he was at liberty to tell.

He was a crafty old dog. He believed the fire to be of incendiary origin, and was already figuring how this might be turned to account.

Sure that the marshal would not have addressed him in that manner unless he had something of importance to say, Brown extricated himself from the crowd, as soon as he could, and made his way to the marshal's office.

A very knowing look sat on Travers's face when Brown came softly in and closed the door behind him.

"Take a cheer!" he said, with great cordiality. "It's about that fire!"

"I thought so!" and Brown dropped into the proffered chair. "You've heard something."

"You bet. A whole lot!"

Thereupon he proceeded to put Basil Brown in possession of the information imparted by Beebe Small.

He was careful, however, not to hint his belief that Beebe was actually the one who had set the fire. He wished to hold that within his own breast.

Therefore, he told what Beebe had said to him concerning Gid Gale's presence in the upper room, with Beebe's other statements, and exhibited the handcuffs.

Basil Brown paled a little when he saw these; but he took them, and examined them with great care.

"Is there anything about them—any suggestive mark?"

"In what way?"

"To tell where they were obtained! Any brand or anything of that kind?"

"Not that I can see. A handcuff's a handcuff, I take it!"

Basil Brown sighed and ruminated.

"I didn't know but there might be something to tell where this fellow, Gid Gale, got them! That might be a pointer, showing where he came from!"

"Hain't nothing of the kind, that I can see," Travers declared, closely eying his chief.

"Well, take good care of them," handing them back to the marshal. "They may be needed, some day. And now, about this other matter! Of course, Gid Gale fired my house!"

"Of course!" Travers coolly assented.

"He fired my house, and he must suffer for it. Fire-bugs can't be allowed to run rampant in Tangled Pine! The whole camp is in imminent peril. If a fire should start in these pine buildings, down here, it would mean ruin!"

"But I must have time to think over the subject, Travers. We don't want to move too hastily!"

He was already doing some heavy thinking; and, when he had said this, he got on his feet, as if he intended to leave the office.

The marshal, also, arose; and, together, the two went down into the street.

Immediately, they heard talk of the accident to Beebe; and almost involuntarily turned their footsteps toward the restaurant of Kansas Kate, where it was said Beebe had been taken.

Beebe had returned to consciousness, under the woman's skillful treatment; and most of the loungers who had gathered in the front room, through curiosity, had gone away.

Brown sent one of the servants in to ask how the young man was getting along; and, when Kansas Kate learned that Basil Brown and the marshal were in the outer room, she permitted them to enter the apartment, occupied now solely by herself and Beebe Small.

Beebe was apparently himself again; though the red had faded out of his face and given place to an unnatural pallor; and the blood-soaked bandage on his head did not add to his good looks.

He lay on the cot, clothed as when brought in; and the stains on his garments, gained by crawling through Basil Brown's disused rooms, were painfully apparent.

Beebe knew this; and flushing tried to draw a blanket across his body.

Both Brown and the marshal observed the movement. To the marshal, it was proof confirmatory of his opinion that Beebe had started the fire; though Basil Brown appeared to attach no such importance to the fact.

He knew that Beebe was a fop; and, supposing the stains had been gained by the fall, thought Beebe's dandyish pride responsible for it.

The two men had scarcely entered the room, before Kansas Kate managed to whisper into Brown's ear that she wanted a word with him, and desired the marshal to retire.

"I'll see you in the street, in a few minutes," Brown said, to Travers; and the latter, taking the hint, discreetly withdrew.

When he was gone, and Kansas Kate had assured herself no one was within hearing distance, she turned to Brown.

"I suppose you think you know who fired your house?"

Brown was taken by surprise, but he tried to conceal it.

"Well, what if I do?"

"Of course, I knew you had guessed it already! But you shan't punish him for it! You understand? You shall not punish him for it! Beebe was crazy with jealousy, when he let such a silly thing come into his head, or he wouldn't have done it!"

Accustomed as Brown was to school his features and conceal his emotions, he could hardly hide the start this gave him. He had not thought of Beebe.

Beebe had been listening, with equal interest; and, when that last sentence came out, he arose in the bed, his face fairly livid.

"Who said I fired the house?" he ejaculated, wild with excited fear. "Who said I done anything of the kind?"

His fiery questions seemed to agitate Kansas Kate; but she replied, with much emphasis:

"You blabbed it yourself, Beebe, not a quarter of an hour ago! You was out of your head, of course when you did it!"

"It's a lie!" Beebe snarled, though he could not be sure he had not revealed his secret in the manner stated.

Kansas Kate flushed, and seemed on the point of giving him a hot retort.

"Let it pass," she said, turning about, and again addressing Brown.

"Beebe wouldn't acknowledge a thing of that kind; and I don't know as I blame him. Still, he started the fire! The knowledge needn't go any further. We three can keep it locked up in our own breasts.

"It's the motive he had, that I want to speak of."

She seemed as much excited, and as blunderingly foolish at the instant, as Beebe had ever been; and, all of a sudden, she realized this, and stopped short.

Drawing Brown into a far corner of the room, she whispered:

"I'm a fool, I know! I didn't intend that Beebe should hear what I wanted to say to you. It's the motive he had!"

"He's crazy jealous; and we must hurry up your marriage with Josie, or something's going to occur that will keep you from ever marrying her. He'll do something, sure, to spoil our plans. Can't you hurry it up?"

"Confound it, haven't I been trying to hurry it up, these weeks? And what progress have I made?"

"I'll see if I can't help you more," she whispered. "I'm interested in the thing, you know!"

He looked at her, strangely.

"You are playing me true in this, are you, Kansas Kate?"

"True as steel!" she asserted.

"I didn't know. I have my fears, sometimes."

His doubts seemed to touch her; and she walked back toward the bed.

Beebe was wildly excited. He had arisen from the cot, and was looking for his hat.

"Where are you going?" she snapped.

"I'm going home!" was his sullen reply. "I'm all right, now!"

But he reeled a little, as he moved about the room.

However, he found the hat, and nothing she could say would dissuade him from going.

He stepped out, banging the door angrily after him.

Brown followed him, shortly; and she shot after him these words:

"You'd better hurry up that important event! If you don't, your plans will be spoiled!"

CHAPTER XI.

AN EXHIBITION OF BITTER HATE.

No sooner had these two departed than Kansas Kate's whole attitude and appearance changed.

She glared at the door; and a fierce, tigerish hate rested on her features.

This hate burned against Basil Brown, to judge by her words:

"You double-dyed villain! You find incarnate!"

She clinched her fist and shook it at the door.

Apparently, she was in a mood to tear Basil Brown, limb from limb, if but the strength and opportunity had served her.

"You think I'm your friend! You think I'm aiding you! Ay, I am; aiding you; but I've got a purpose of my own in doing it."

This last seemed to recall her to her senses.

She passed through the door into the other room; cast a shawl about her, and hastened into the street.

She turned down the street, toward Farnall's, and in a little while overtook Beebe.

Beebe had been spoken to once or twice; and was about to slink into an alley to escape these attentions, when Kansas Kate came up with him.

"You're too weak to go home alone this way," she averred, taking his arm. "Let me help you!"

Beebe was about to cast her off, with a snarl; but he thought better of it, and permitted her to walk on at his side.

"Does your head still pain you? You must be very careful, Beebe. You oughtn't to have got out of bed so soon. If you take cold in that cut you'll suffer for it!"

Her tones were solicitous in the extreme.

"What did you say that for?" Beebe growled.

"Say what?"

"That I was the fire-bug. I tell you it ain't so!"

A smile flitted over her face, though Beebe did not see it.

"You told me so yourself, when you didn't know what you were talking about."

"I don't believe it!" Beebe ejaculated.

"How did I find it out, then?"

"I don't know. You just guessed it."

"Very well, have it your own way. I was a fool, though, when I spoke of it that way to Basil Brown. I acknowledge that much, Beebe. Maybe, I'd better see him again, and try to undo the harm. But he won't dare take advantage of it. He'll not try to touch you!"

"I don't know so much about that!" said Beebe, wondering dully at the strangeness of this woman.

Even his sluggish mind perceived that Kansas Kate was as changeable as a prairie breeze—that, in fact, she showed all the eccentricity of manner that might be expected to accompany a well-developed case of hysteria.

In truth, Kansas Kate's nerves were wrought up to a dreadful pitch that night, for some unknown reason.

Apparently, she had schemes of her own; and inner secrets, that she tried to keep closely locked in her heart.

The fact that she did not always succeed very well, probably grew out of the very character of those secrets.

"I have some influence with him," Kansas Kate declared, speaking of Brown. "I tell you, he'll not bother you about that fire! I don't think he'll care to!"

She seemed anxious to change the subject; and, having said this, began to question him again about his injury and of the manner in which it had been received.

Beebe did not care to explain the matter too fully. He told her, though, that he caught his toe in coming down the stairway, and was precipitated against the banister. He did not tell her of his interview with Travers.

Thus talking, they walked on to the house, Kansas Kate assisting him, for Beebe was weak and shaky; and, when the house was gained, she entered it with him.

She had an object in this; which became quickly apparent, when Beebe went up to his room.

Kansas Kate remained below, for a word with Josie Farnall.

It took her quite awhile to say that word; for Beebe's hurts had to be discussed, and the fire at Brown's called for considerable comment.

But the crafty woman edged to the subject, finally.

"It would be just too bad if that splendid house was to burn before you get a chance to step into it, as its mistress. You've an opportunity, Josie, that most girls would jump at. There isn't a richer man in these mountains—nor a more respectable! If you should marry him, it would put you in a position to help your father a great deal, you know!"

Though Kansas Kate had not been in Tangled Pine a great while, she had taken every advantage to cultivate the acquaintance of this girl. There had been a party at Farnall's, one night; and Kansas Kate furnished the refreshments for the occasion. Ever since that night, she had insisted on an intimacy, as the result of this—pushing her way, with a quiet tact that was somewhat remarkable.

Josie did not like her, mainly for the reason that she was always singing the praises of Basil Brown.

Now, while Basil Brown was very good in his way, Josie did not hold him in high favor, and was not pleased with his constant attentions. A certain business transaction, connecting Brown and her father, did not increase her regard for Brown.

Nevertheless, this little business affair was one of the strongest levers relied on by Brown to move the obstinate mountain of Josie's heart.

She replied as courteously to Kansas Kate as she could; but gave Kansas Kate to understand that she cared not a rap of her finger for Basil Brown, and was pretty sure that she should never care any more for him than she did at that instant.

"But think of his wealth!" was Kansas Kate's alluring suggestion. "He's the richest man in Tangled Pine. Think what it would mean to marry the richest man in Tangled Pine!"

"If he was a gold man, and I could melt him down into dollars, I don't think I should want him!"

This was such poor encouragement, that Kansas Kate soon after withdrew, not at all pleased with the result of the interview.

CHAPTER XII.

"YOU'RE THE FIRE-BUG!"

WHEN the Gold-Camp Detective descended from the upper story of Basil Brown's residence, and let himself out of the house, the excitement of the fire was about over.

A few people still lingered there, but they apparently paid no heed to Gale; who, slouching his hat over his eyes, walked quickly to the rear of the building.

Here he found a path led him to a fence; which he scaled, and hastened on toward the town.

His espionage of Basil Brown had yielded no favorable results. It had, in fact, only placed the Gold-Camp Detective in an exceedingly awkward and ticklish position.

The detective thought much of his encounters with Silvertip and Beebe Small, in those upper rooms; and his reflections made him uneasy.

When he had gained the town, he sauntered quietly along the street, apparently as unconcerned a man as there was in Tangled Pine; and he took courage, when he saw that no one observed him, or gave him any suspicious glances.

Anxious to know what the groups were talking about, he joined one of them, and took part in the conversation.

It related almost entirely to the fire; and, though there were many conjectures, no one seemed to know for a surety that the fire was not purely accidental.

He remained with, and near, this crowd, a long time; but was turning from it, when he saw Travers approaching.

He had no very kindly feelings for the Terror of Tarantula, with whom he had already had an encounter.

Not wishing a second, he turned aside; and was about to cross the street, when Travers stepped quickly forward; and, laying a hand on Gale's shoulder, said, in a voice loud enough to be heard by every one near:

"You're the fire-bug! And I arrest you, in the name of the law, for setting fire to Basil Brown's house!"

The Gold-Camp Detective drew back, with a flush, and lifted a hand, as if to push the marshal away.

The loudly-spoken words of the marshal, attracting general attention, drew a crowd about the two men.

"What you say is false!" Gale asserted, with much bitterness. "Why should I fire Basil Brown's house?"

"That's for you to explain!" and Travers's face lighted, evilly. "I'm not expected to know what makes every rascal commit a crime!"

The crowd about emboldened him; and he said more than he would have said, under other circumstances. He saw at his back a number of his personal heelers. He was charging Gale with being a criminal, before any such thing had been proven, a thing no wise official would have done.

The Gold-Camp Detective longed to take the bullying marshal by the throat; but he quelled his rising anger. He saw that to attempt a resistance would be impolitic, under the circumstances. More than one unfriendly glance was given him; and only a word or two would be needed to precipitate trouble.

The elements that went to make up the population of Tangled Pine were of a very inflammable character.

"It is false," he said, reiterating his first declaration, "but I'll go with you, just the same. I demand, though, that I be given an impartial trial. It's a reasonable demand; and I ask that these gentlemen will see that this one favor is given me!"

It pleased him to observe that his words created a favorable impression; and he turned away with the marshal, and walked up the street, with something like composure.

"There are good men in Tangled Pine!" he thought. "Surely, they will see that I get justice!"

Nevertheless, he was uneasy. It was barely possible he had been seen to leave Brown's residence. Silvertip and Beebe Small knew he had been in those upper rooms. Would either of them testify falsely against him?

Even if they did not testify falsely, what they might say, if placed on the witness stand, would be considered very damaging.

"Why am I accused of this thing?" Gale asked Travers, as they walked on, side by side.

"You was seen hidin' there!" came the reply.

"By whom?" the detective quietly questioned.

The marshal was not prepared to give a direct answer to the question.

"You will know, soon enough!"

"And, if I refuse to go further with you on such a charge?"

"I'll call a crowd of the boys, and you'll wish you'd gone on, peaceable!"

During this little colloquy, Gale closely studied the marshal's face, and came to the conclusion that such a refusal would please that individual only too well.

And, in this, he was right. Travers hoped Gale would commit some act that would justify him in calling a *posse* to his assistance.

He felt that the *posse* would in all probability turn into a mob; with the result that the detective would quickly dangle from the nearest lamp-post.

There was protection for Gale within the walls of the jail, to which they were hurrying; and Gale wisely decided to go on, without further words.

And, as he continued on at the marshal's side, he tried to plan some way to secure his release and his safety, in the morning.

But he could think of nothing. Being so much a stranger in the town, there were no friends on whom he could call for assistance.

The jail was but a flimsy structure.

The detective had not closely scanned it,

before; and, now, when it slowly opened and admitted him, he began to fear that, after all, he made a mistake in coming there so quietly.

Those shaky walls would not bar out a mob.

If they would not bar out a mob, however, were they sufficiently strong to hold him through the night, if he desired to get out?

"He believed not; but he was not sure he desired to gain his liberty in that way. He could not afford to fly from the town, with his mission there unaccomplished. If he broke jail, he would be forced to fly.

And, thus puzzling over his unpleasant situation, he fell back on a resource that would be left him when all others failed. He could exhibit his badge, and his commission as an authorized representative of the Secret Service and thus defend his right to enter the home of Basil Brown in search of information.

"I don't want to do that though!" he muttered, as the prison door clanged behind him, and he was left alone. "That would be to give away every advantage. I must fight it out on some other line, if I can!"

CHAPTER XIII.

HELP FROM AN UNKNOWN FRIEND.

FROM a barred window, Gid Gale could look out on the grounds about the jail.

The insecure prison was set on a knoll which commanded a fair view of the town, and the detective could see into the lighted streets and behold the forms there moving about.

The uneasiness that had been on him ever since his arrest increased, as he saw the knots of excited men grow in numbers on the street corners.

He had more than once beheld the materialization of a mob; and recognized this grouping of earnest men as its first symptoms.

These groups swelled and collected into a single one which moved toward the jail; causing his uneasiness to change to alarm.

There was a jailer, in addition to the city marshal; but so far, this jailer had not been seen by the detective.

However, even as Gid Gale looked on the gathering storm, the door of the prison opened, and the jailer glided in.

He passed down the corridor, near the prisoner; but did not look at him. But, when he had gone by, the detective observed that a slip of paper had fluttered from his hand to the floor.

Gale picked it up with some haste, and took it to the barred window where he strained his eyes to read it.

It was a short, unsigned note.

"Keep cool!" it said. "You have a friend in the town who will help you. Do not resist the mob, but go with them quietly. You can rely on the writer of this note!"

The detective did not recognize the handwriting. He thrilled with pleasure and with doubt. Had this come from the hands of a true friend, or from that of an enemy?

He knew that every word of the note might be false, and intended for the sole purpose of inducing him to submissively accompany the mob.

But, as he read it over and over, a feeling grew on him that the writer of the note was sincere.

He turned to question the jailer but the latter, had disappeared. He was sure the friend could not be this jailer. Some one had given the note to the jailer and bribed him to deliver it to Gale.

This was the only reasonable explanation; and Gale twisted the paper into a wad, which he thrust into his mouth, as he again looked from the window.

When he had chewed the paper into an unrecognizable pulp, he cast it out between the bars.

"I'll have to give this unknown a chance to help me," was his thought. "There's nothing else I can do, now!"

The mob was coming on, rapidly; and Gale would not have been given time to break from his prison, had he desired to select that course of action.

"If worst comes to worst, I can make a fight of it!" he muttered. "They'll find that I won't go down—or up—very easily!"

He felt that his position was precarious. This mob, inflamed to madness, would not be at all considerate. Very probably, he would be dragged out into the timber, where a rope would be tossed over a limb, and he would be strung up, without ceremony.

Even if he showed his badge as a detective, it was not likely to avail anything with these men. He would not be permitted to attempt a defense, or to establish his innocence of the crime charged.

In a very few minutes, the mob was at the jail door, and clamoring loudly for admittance.

The jailer appeared at the door, and tried to reason with the angry men. He might as well have tried to reason with a whirlwind. They demanded the prisoner; and threatened to break in the door, if it was not opened.

"Open the door," Gale advised. "I will go with them!"

He knew it must come to this, anyway; and hoped to gain a point, by thus yielding.

The jailer complied, still arguing with the men, and the mob streamed in.

"Here I am!" the detective announced, coming forward. "I hope you will not tie me, if I go along peaceably!"

But this favor was not granted him.

He was seized, with much roughness, and his hands were bound. Then he was rudely pushed from the room, and out at the doorway.

A number of horses had been brought up.

These Gale had not seen, as they had approached from another direction.

On one of these horses he was mounted; and a dozen members of the mob climbed in the saddles and surrounded him.

Scarcely a word was spoken by any one.

Then, the horsemen galloped away, with Gale in their midst; and headed toward a densely timbered canyon, about a mile from the town.

Gale wondered where the friend was who had promised to help him in this emergency?

The rough men about him, who hustled him and treated him with such contumely, surely did not hold that friend in their midst!

The outlook was very gloomy for the Gold-Camp Detective, at that moment; but there was one thing that still gave him a ray of hope. He had been set in the deep saddle, but he was not bound to it.

And, though his hands were tied, there was a chance—a very slim chance, it is true—that he might leap to the ground, and escape by lively running.

Striking into the main trail, the horsemen pushed their animals into a brisk gait, and galloped toward the canyon.

Basil Brown and the marshal had worked quickly. They realized that there must be no delays, if they hoped to accomplish their purpose—which was the murder of Gid Gale.

But they had not worked openly.

Rumors had been set afloat; and these, spreading rapidly, as rumors will, became changed into the very blackest kind of evidence, as they flew from mouth to mouth.

If there was one thing that Tangled Pine feared, it was a "fire-bug." The houses of the camp were little else than pine shells, and, if the torch of the incendiary should be once lifted against these flimsy structures, the camp was doomed.

Knowing this they proposed to make an example of Gid Gale, which should deter others from committing similar acts.

It was the common presumption that Gale had fired the house to cover up a robbery. He was a stranger in Tangled Pine, without any ostensible business there, which gave color to the charge against him.

But by far the larger portion of those constituting the mob were friends and adherents of Basil Brown and the Terror from Tarantula. A tie that was stronger than friendship—and which will be revealed in due season—linked them to Brown and the marshal.

The hope of the Gold-Camp Detective, that the writer of the note would come to his assistance, grew fainter and fainter. It almost vanished, when the rough country in the vicinity of the canyon was gained.

He hardly realized how much he had relied on that hope, until it left him. Now he began to tell himself he was a fool for having trusted in a promise so given! He might have known it was a decoy—a base decep-

tion—meant to draw him from the jail, without a struggle.

He had been conquered by the falsehood. Instead of fighting to the death, within the walls of the jail, he had meekly walked out, in the midst of the mob, toward the hangman's tree.

The darkness grew intense in the deep gully through which the horses were now traveling.

The limb of a tree brushed the face of Gid Gale; and something else, which was not the limb of a tree, touched him on the arm and shoulder.

He was suddenly aware that one of the horsemen had crowded close up and was leaning against him.

The hands of this horseman slipped down to the wrists of the detective, and then, a quick knife-thrust severed the restraining bonds.

Gid Gale could scarcely realize what had occurred. His mind could hardly grasp the idea that all his limbs were free. That he was free to act; free to hurl himself from the saddle; free to make a dash for life and liberty!

His brain whirled.

Was this the help promised in the note given to him in the prison? Was this the unknown friend?

Scarcely had he asked himself these questions when a voice whispered—the voice of the friendly horseman; and these were the words which the detective caught:

"Dash for it!"

Gid Gale thrilled under this low command, —there was such a familiar ring in the tones. It was a disguised voice, but he knew he had heard it before;—that he had heard it, disguised as now.

It brought back the scene on the mountain trail, and the face of the horseman who had ridden to the rescue of Josie Farnall. And it likewise brought back recollections of Kansas Kate.

The horseman was the same!

Sure of this, Gid Gale would have clutched the knife-hand and whispered a question, in spite of the peril; but the hand was instantly withdrawn, and the horseman edged away.

"Dash for it!" rung as an echo in the detective's ears.

And he resolved to make the dash, then and there!

CHAPTER XIV.

A BOLD GAME.

GID GALE's first impulse was to grasp the bridle rein, sink his heels into the sides of the animal he rode, and make a wild dash, in accordance with the advice given.

But, even as he reached for the rein, he thought better of it. He knew that, if he succeeded in breaking away, a shower of rifle balls would assuredly follow him, and with probably a fatal result. At such close range, the darkness of the night would not afford much protection.

Craft was better than reckless courage; and, so thinking, he remained quietly in the saddle, until other tree-boughs began to brush and scrape at the heads and shoulders of the mob; when he let himself quietly down, dropping to the ground with the silence of a falling leaf.

The leader of the party was issuing some commands, at the time; and the swishing of the disturbed branches created a confusion that was very favorable to the detective's escape.

Two or three of the men were struck in the face by swinging limbs, drawing from them exclamations of anger.

In spite of the threatening hoofs, Gid Gale flattened himself on the ground; where he lay, like a veritable shadow, until the horses passed beyond him.

Then, with serpentine stealth, he crawled from the trail, and sought refuge in some cranny at the side of the gorge.

Hardly had he done this, when a shout arose, announcing the discovery of his escape.

This was followed, instantly, by curses and cries of anger.

The detective hesitated, not knowing what course to pursue. If he ran back toward the town, he would be pursued and probably overtaken; and, if he concealed himself in any of the crevices of the rock, he would

most likely be searched out by the aid of torches.

His indecision was brought to an end by the backward rush of a number of the horsemen.

These men knew that Gid Gale had been in their midst only an instant before; and that, consequently, he could not now be far away.

Into the nearest aperture the detective crowded, where he crouched, waiting for the horsemen to pass.

The place was but a cleft in the rock, hardly large enough to hide him; but it served his purpose.

The shouts and calls of the angry men showed that the mob had divided—some going back along the trail and others making a search of the gorge. These latter had dismounted; and were moving from point to point, on foot. In a little while they would reach the place where Gale was crouching, and they would certainly discover him.

The detective saw that only boldness of the most desperate character would now serve him. He could not retreat down the gorge, because of the horsemen; nor could he remain in hiding.

Realizing this, and relying on the darkness, he stepped out of the crevice, intending to mingle with the searchers and avert suspicion.

The gloom would favor him; and the time would probably come when he could extricate himself from the tangle.

A lantern had been lighted and some torches were being prepared. The light given out by these would bring to Gale his greatest peril.

As he stepped out from the crevice, determined on this bold course, he saw, dimly outlined before him, a riderless horse. Its bridle-rein had been thrown to the ground, and it was standing there, obediently quiet, as a well-trained Western broncho will do when thus left.

Gale stepped close up to it; and, seeing it was not the horse he had ridden, a still bolder plan came into his mind.

He threw the rein over the animal's head and swung into the saddle.

Then he turned the horse down the gorge, intending to join the searching party that had gone that way—or avoid it, should this be among the possibilities.

Two of the men who were on foot came close up to him.

One of them carried a lantern; and, as he saw Gale move down the gorge, he called out a question.

The detective mumbled an answer, which could not have been understood, and urged the horse from the dangerous vicinity.

He had seldom been in so great peril. Surrounded by the members of this wild mob, who were thirsting for his blood and enraged at his unaccountable escape, the chances that he would be able to break away were not promising.

The horse broke into a canter, that carried it, all too quickly, to the group of horsemen, lower down.

The gorge widened, at this point; and Gale pulled his steed to the right, hoping he might pass his foes and place himself in position for a successful run toward the town.

Even in the gloom, the horse he rode was recognized:

One of the men called:

"Come this way, Jeffreys! We're all going this way!"

Instead of complying, the detective allowed his horse to continue on in its course; thus arousing the suspicions of the man who had addressed him.

The man rode toward Gale.

"What's up?" was his question.

The detective saw he would be forced to reply.

"I've got my saddle tangled," he answered, in a low tone, mumbling his words, as before.

As he said this, he stooped over and seemed to be tugging at the cinches.

Although he was outwardly so cool, his pulses were rioting. No hunted man was ever more desperate than he at that moment. He was resolved he would not be taken. Come what might, he would not yield himself again into the hands of that mob.

The friend who had assisted him was there; and would probable befriend him again, if it could be done. But Gale proposed to take no risks. He could die but once; and he preferred to die fighting there in the gorge than at the end of a rope in the timber further on.

"I've got my saddle tangled," he repeated, in the same manner, continuing his pretense of struggling with the cinches. "Go on; and I'll follow, in a minute!"

It was a clever ruse, but it did not work. Something in the tones, or in the mumbled words, quickened the man's suspicions.

He loosened his revolver and rode straight on.

However, he did not call out warningly to his companions, as he might have done, and thus render Gale's case more desperate.

The detective's stern determination grew, as the horseman drew nearer.

"Mebbe you can help me!" he said, thinking thereby to induce the man to dismount.

The latter was within less than two yards.

"Who are you? was the hoarse question "You're not Jeffreys!"

The moment for action had arrived!

Gid Gale lifted himself in the stirrups, urged his horse against that of the other—not allowing a moment's time to intervene;—and then, with a powerful swing of his heavy right hand, dealt the man so stunning a blow that he was temporarily paralyzed.

Before he could recover, Gale had hurled him from the saddle.

Feeling sure the conflict had been heard, and that other members of the mob would be instantly on him, the detective threw all caution to the wind, and rode at a headlong pace down the gorge, in the direction of Tangled Pine.

Fortunately the horsemen were somewhat scattered, and so distributed that all of them could not fire at the escaping prisoner without great danger of killing each other.

As one rifle cracked after another, and the jets of flame spouted out of the gloom, Gid Gale bent cringing on the saddle-horn, realizing that, if the horse was hit by one of the balls, his situation would be almost as desperate as if the wound was received in his own person.

The obedient animal, not knowing the peril it ran, leaped down the rocky ravine, like an arrow shot from a bow, and rapidly bore the detective beyond reach of the rattling rifle-fire.

CHAPTER XV.

THE TERROR TAKES WATER.

THE horse which the detective bestrode was of exceptional speed. It was plain in that, whoever Jeffreys was, he was a good judge of horse-flesh, and possessed of as fine a steed as there was in the party.

The mounted members of the mob, though they did not exactly understand how the thing had occurred, were reasonably sure that the man riding down the trail was the one whose life they sought; and they, thereupon, streamed after him.

It was a hot chase. The detective, realizing that his life hung in the balance, rode like the wind; and he soon pulled away from his pursuers.

He drew the horse into a walk, though, as he approached the town, and became again alert and cautious. He knew that there were enemies in front of him as well as behind him. The town held foes as deadly as any from which he was running.

Prominent among the enemies he knew to be still in Tangled Pine were Basil Brown, and Travers, the marshal. He was positive neither of these men had been in the party that had dragged him from the jail.

Probably they were too wary to thus show their hands. They deemed it advisable to put forward a number of their tools; and to make the hanging-bee, which they had planned, seem the result of a spontaneous uprising of the people of the camp against the fire-bug.

Knowing that these men were in the town, and knowing also that they were the instigators of all that had lately happened, Gid Gale drew his horse into a walk, as has been said, and thought over the situation.

He could not determine what was the best

course to pursue. It hardly seemed wise to ride boldly into the camp on Jeffreys's horse. Indeed, it seemed hardly wise to go into the camp at all. Yet he was not willing to hide in the mountains and abandon the work that had brought him to Tangled Pine.

He ran over the names of the few acquaintances he had made, on whom he fancied he might rely. Only two names came to him, that suggested friendship and good will. These were the names of Kansas Kate and Old Silvertip.

Old Silvertip was a vagabond, scarcely able to help himself; and Kansas Kate was a woman, who might not be willing to conceal him about her premises.

Moreover, he was certain Kansas Kate was with the mob. Nothing could shake him from the conviction that it was she who had severed his bonds and told him to make a dash for it.

Kansas Kate was a very puzzling character. He had studied her, but had not understood her.

Forced to do something, he decided to leave the horse, enter the town on foot, and seek shelter at Kansas Kate's. He felt he could rely on her kindness; and that, when she returned, she would do what she could to aid him. Probably she would be fertile in suggestions and able to devise plans better than any of his.

The detective was very near the town now—in its very suburbs. He stopped the horse and was about to dismount, when a voice called to him.

It was the voice of Travers, the city marshal and Terror from Tarantula.

Like the man in the gorge, Travers addressed the detective as "Jeffreys," and came toward him.

Gale's anger burned against the marshal. Knowing how treacherous Travers had been, a hatred that was almost deadly came into the detective's heart.

At the same time he could not help being amused at the mistake Travers made.

"I'll have to get acquainted with that man Jeffreys," was his thought. "He'll prove an interesting character, surely!"

The Terror called again as he came forward, and Gale mumbled a reply, at the same time urging on the horse; and, when he was near the marshal, he leaped quickly to the earth, caught that individual by the throat and threw him quickly and deftly.

There was never a more astounded villain than Tom Travers.

Expecting to meet a friend, he found himself clutched by a foe whom he did not know and banged against the ground in a way to make his bones crack.

"What does this hyer mean?" he growled. "If that's you, Jeffreys, I'll kill ye! Hain't drunk, I reckon!"

"Jeffreys is dead, and I've come to take his place!" Gale announced, gripping the marshal by the collar and dragging him bodily away from the trail. "You know me; and you know that I'm not likely to be in good humor to-night. If you go to yelping, it will be the worse for you!"

The horse, left to himself, and probably frightened by the scuffle, galloped on toward the town.

Travers knew well enough now, whose clutch was on his throat; and he cringed and shivered in a most cowardly fashion.

"You thought to have me hanged, but I slipped through the clutches of your mob. It was all nicely planned, Travers; but it didn't work. If you'll visit one of the big trees, at the upper end of the gorge, you'll probably find your friend, Jeffreys, hanging there in my place. I came in on his horse, you see!"

The statement greatly bewildered Travers and added to his fright.

He was quite ready to believe that Jeffreys was ornamenting one of the trees; and, so believing, his fear of this wonderful man, who had worked such a trick of fortune, greatly increased.

"What are you goin' to do with me?" he gurgled.

"I'm going to make you tell the truth, Travers, if you never told it before in your life!"

Travers wriggled and seemed on the point of bawling for help. At the same time the noise of hoofs was heard, showing that the mob was approaching the camp.

"Remember what I said!" Gale cautioned. "If you cry out—If you so much as move a hand, without my permission!"

He did not put the threat further into words, but his sinewy fingers closed on Travers's windpipe, in a manner so horribly suggestive that Travers crouched down in a very spasm of blind terror.

"Don't!" he moaned. "Don't!"

"And yet you would have hanged me!" the detective reminded, not relinquishing his grip.

"The fact that your friends are out there"—referring to the galloping horsemen—"will not avail you. I have dragged you here to ask you some questions. I intend to ask them; and you shall answer them, no matter who comes or goes."

Nevertheless, he did not immediately put the questions to the terrified marshal, but crouched there in the gloom, holding the marshal quiet by a species of strange fascination until the members of the mob had passed.

Never had the Terror of Tarantula made such an exhibition of his innate cowardice. He was a bully, and nothing more. One of those men who swell with big words, but fail in performance. He was mortally afraid of Gid Gale, and his present attitude was a manifestation of that fear.

When the last horseman had thundered by, Gale permitted the scared wretch to sit erect, holding him in submission by what Travers believed to be a revolver.

This was nothing but a crooked stick, picked from the ground at that point. It looked very much like a revolver in the darkness. So much so that Travers did not once question its deadly character; though a little thought must have shown him the impossibility of its being anything of the kind.

"If you don't want me to use this," holding the pretended weapon most threateningly, "you will speak up without delay!"

As he said it he boldly reached over and plucked a revolver from the marshal's belt, and laid it at his side.

"I'll take care of this! You might hurt yourself with it. You're ready to answer my questions, I reckon?"

"What is it you want of me?" Travers shivered. "Say your say, and let me go. You think I've been your enemy, but I hain't! The little trouble we've had come about—"

"No need to remind me how it came about! I recollect it very well. But I want to talk of to-night! Why did you get that mob to take me from the jail?"

Travers began a stout denial.

"Go slow!" the detective warned. "I told you that I'd have nothing but the truth. Why did you get that mob to take me from the jail? Why did you and Basil Brown plan to kill me in that way?"

This final question completely staggered the rascal.

"Basil Brown never—"

"There's no use denying what I know to be true, Travers! You and Basil Brown organized that mob! I'm not asking about that, because I know it's so. I just want to know the reason. Why did you do it?"

"We wanted to run you out of the camp!" Travers confessed, in hopeless desperation.

"By hanging me! And why?"

Travers writhed in attempted evasions.

"You'll have to ask Brown!" he exclaimed. "I don't pretend to know what Brown meant!"

"Then, Brown wanted to get rid of me. He wanted to put me out of the way. What has he against me?"

"He says you're a detective!" Travers incautiously blurted.

"And he's afraid of detectives?"

"I didn't say that!"

"No; but what you did say meant the same thing."

Having gained this much, Gale changed the point of his attack, and tried to worm some further information out of the rascally marshal. For one thing, he tried to discover the identity of Old Silvertip, and something concerning the mystery of Kansas Kate.

Apparently the Terror of Tarantula knew nothing on these subjects.

"I'm willin' to tell you everything I know!" he professed. "But I jist don't know anything about these hyer people!"

The detective arose, somewhat disappointed. He was strongly tempted to apply the toe of his boot to the cowardly scamp who crouched and trembled so abjectly before him. But he did not.

"I'll just keep your revolver," he said, "as a guarantee that you'll conduct yourself properly until you're again in the town. When I feel that I can trust you, I'll return it."

"Of course you'll go straight to Basil Brown and tell him what has occurred. That's just what I want you to do. I want you to tell him that even his mob couldn't down me, after they thought they had me safe in their clutches."

"Tell him I have friends, of whom he does not dream; that I have allies, in circles that he does not suspect. Tell him he can not trust his own tools and his mob—a thing which the events of the night ought to plainly show him."

"Tell him, too, that my friends in the town will stand by me; and that I propose to make it so hot for him he will wish he had let me alone!"

The Terror was scrambling to his feet, anxious to bolt from the vicinity.

"Don't forget these messages! If you do, I'll take pains to stir you up about it. Tell Mr. Basil Brown that I have friends in Tangled Pine who will stand by me!"

CHAPTER XVI.

A PAIR OF ALLIES

THE Terror of Tarantula vanished into the gloom, as soon as he was permitted to do so; and the detective cast about as to what course he should pursue.

He had been very bold in his threats; yet he was now forced to admit that there was no one to whom he could turn and on whose friendship he could rely.

It seemed almost suicidal to go on into Tangled Pine, but this was what he decided to do, after debating the matter for a few moments.

"If I run from the storm, it will be the same as confessing everything. I can't afford to do that. I might as well run, though, as to hide."

Uncertain what to do, he went on into the town; resolved to be guided by the exigencies of the night. It seemed the only thing he could do.

He had asserted strongly that there were friends in Tangled Pine who would stand by him in his fight against Basil Brown.

The assertions seemed almost prophecy; for, when he had turned from the narrow street into the principal one leading past the main buildings, he was confronted, by Sam Farnall.

Farnall was accompanied by another man, and also by Beebe Small.

"We've been looking for you!" Farnall averred, with much earnestness. "We want to help you. You can count on us as friends! Come this way. It won't be safe for you to go down the street!"

Gid Gale looked at the three men earnestly, studying their features by the light of the nearest street lamp.

He was willing to trust Sam Farnall; but he had little enough faith in Beebe Small; and the third man was a stranger.

This third man Farnall hastily introduced as Dick Drayton, an attorney.

When the name was pronounced, Gale understood dimly the nature of the enmity this man held against Brown.

Drayton was a lawyer, with political aspirations. Basil Brown was not a lawyer, but he had political aspirations, that ran in the same channel as Drayton's. Hence, Drayton and Brown were rivals, and enemies.

Brown's paper, the *Tangled Pine Bough*, had contained some slurs against Drayton, as well as some slanders. Drayton treasured these things and longed for revenge.

Farnall looked uneasily up and down the street.

"We'd better not be seen standing here," he urged. "The town is a little wild, you know!"

"Lead on!" Gale commanded.

Fortune seemed favoring him, and he felt he would be ungrateful, indeed, to offer any criticisms on the turn its favors might take.

He had been longing for friends; asserting that he had such friends, and here were men offering to stand by him.

Only for Beebe Small, he would have been perfectly willing to trust his fate to Sam Farnall. Though Beebe was a member of Farnall's family, the detective had good reasons to distrust him.

Farnall turned into one of the little streets that led from the heart of the town, but, when he had gone half a square, he changed his course.

This change of direction brought the party against the rear of the building occupied by Drayton as a law office.

Drayton took a key from his pocket and opened the rear door.

"We'll dispense with a light," he said, as he ushered the party into the building. "The stars and the street lamps will have to serve us."

He found some chairs, which he placed for his guests; and then began to talk on the incidents of the night.

Suddenly he turned to Gale.

"You see here three men who are disposed to help you! We have our reasons, and good ones, as you will admit when you know them. In return for the aid we offer you, we ask that you help us!"

As he said this, he seated himself near the window that overlooked the street.

From this window could be heard the rough talk of various members of the mob.

"Whatever you've got to say, I'm willing to listen to!" Gale avowed, with much calmness.

"I'm Brown's enemy, because he has slandered me in his paper and has wronged me in many ways," the lawyer explained; and then proceeded to give a detailed account of some of the wrongs and injuries Brown had put on him.

The character of these insults had been hinted.

"Brown wants to become a member of the Colorado Legislature. I have the same ambition. I propose to start, immediately, a paper in opposition to the *Bough*, and I'm going to down him!"

"Our friend Farnall likes Brown no better than I do. He's got into a financial snarl, through which Brown is trying to rob him of the Heather Bell Mine. He was foolish enough to borrow money off Brown and to execute a mortgage. This mortgage, as it appears, is, in reality, a deed, and on it Brown proposes to take possession of the property."

"You may have heard something of all this, and, if you have, you will understand why Farnall likes Brown no better than I do."

The detective was possessing himself in patience, anxious to learn all he could. He knew something of the Heather Bell trouble.

"But Beebe?" he questioned.

"Beebe is the maddest of the lot," said Drayton. "There's no fool, you know, like a lover. Beebe imagines he thinks a great deal of a certain young lady. Brown has also looked with favor on this young woman; because of which Beebe is madly jealous!"

"And, now, you have the reasons which induce us to hate Basil Brown and to offer you our assistance. The reasons are good, are they not?"

The detective was shaken with a sudden fit of anger, though the darkness concealed it. The flippant manner in which Josie Farnall was discussed much displeased him.

"The best of reasons!" he declared, suppressing his emotions. "And I need not say to you how glad I am that I can avail myself of your friendship. I need friends, now, as much as I ever needed friends in my life. You hear that mob still raging in the streets? What could I do in Tangled Pine, after tonight, without friends?"

"Very true," said Drayton, rubbing his hands. "Of course we expect a return!"

"What is it you ask of me?"

"Simply this," said the lawyer. "I have every reason to believe you possess knowledge of a most damaging character concerning Basil Brown. Put us in possession of that knowledge!"

This was a thing the detective would have preferred not to do, under ordinary circumstances.

He stared out at the sky, for a moment, in deep thought.

Beebe and Farnall had been silent while the lawyer talked; but both plainly assented to all that had been said.

The necessity of securing friends was uppermost in the mind of the detective.

He turned from the window, and looked at the three men before him.

"I will tell you all I know," he declared.

"Basil Brown came from New York, several years ago; settling, finally, in these mountains. What he is now, you know. When in New York, he was a confidential clerk of a very wealthy man, whom he deceived and robbed. He pocketed fifty thousand dollars and left the country. But, when he did it, he did not bear the name of Basil Brown!"

"What name?" the lawyer almost gasped.

Gale's story was very interesting to him. It was a story, which, if it could be backed by proofs, would ruin Basil Brown, even in that wild country, where speculations of this character were not always regarded as crimes.

"He bore the name of Philip Concreve," the detective replied, slowly and thoughtfully.

The reader will perhaps remember that this was the name to which the advertisement, written by Old Silvertip, was addressed.

But it had little meaning to those who heard it there in the lawyer's office.

Nevertheless, the lawyer stored it away in his memory; feeling that, at some time, it might come very handy. On some vital occasion he might be able to thoroughly paralyze Basil Brown by addressing him as Philip Concreve. It was a name he could not afford to forget.

Having said this much, Gid Gale went more into details; and described, with some minuteness, what he knew of the crime Basil Brown had committed, and which had driven Brown from New York to the wilds of the mountains.

There is no reason to quote his words. The reader is in possession of the main facts.

The lawyer was in great glee. With this knowledge, backed by the proofs which Gid Gale claimed to be able to furnish, he felt he could successfully cope with his adversary in the political field.

And Sam Farnall felt that if he could hold this information as a club over Brown's head, he would not be molested in his possession of the Heather Bell Mine.

And Beebe Small! What did Beebe think? His mind seethed and burned and coiled poisonously on itself as if it were a serpent! A venomous hate against Basil Brown filled it; and a hate, that was equally fierce, burned against the detective, Gid Gale.

But he concealed his feelings; and secretly cherished designs against the men he regarded as his bitter enemies.

There was one string to the detective's admissions, which did not at all please his auditors.

The knowledge thus communicated to them was not to be used immediately. The detective had his own plans, which he was resolved to carry out.

However, an arrangement was reached, that was fairly satisfactory; and it was determined that, for temporary refuge, Gale should occupy the Farnall residence.

This was more pleasing to Gale than he was willing to admit.

"You think it will not place your family in jeopardy?" he questioned, addressing Farnall.

That was, to him, the principal consideration. He did not wish Josie to share in the perils to which he might be exposed. Not even his wish to be near her could reconcile him to that.

Farnall had thought of the contingency mentioned by Gale. But he was so well known in the town that he did not believe there would be any danger. In a certain sense, he was fairly popular. He had many friends among the miners and the laboring element. These friends would not see him, or his, injured in any way, by the doings of a mob.

Therefore, relying on these considerations, he assured Gale of his belief that there would be no peril to Josie by the contemplated act.

Gale flushed slightly, at mention of the girl's name; but, as before, the friendly darkness concealed all traces of his emotion.

This much having been settled, Farnall slipped out into the street and made some cautious inquiries and investigations.

He returned, in a short time, with a favorable report.

The mob spirit seemed disappearing. There was much excitement over the escape of the prisoner, whose doom was thought sealed, and many wild conjectures as to how the escape had been accomplished.

"We'll go on to the house," said Farnall. "It will be some time before they find out you are there. A day or more, likely; and things may change in that time. I sent word to Josie!"

Kind indeed seemed the fortune that had aided the detective that night, and he stood ready to follow Farnall, with a feeling of deep thankfulness.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOSIE FARNALL.

THE thoughts of Josie Farnall had been directed toward the Gold-Camp Detective, quite as much as his had been toward her.

It was impossible for her to remain unaware of the occurrences of the night. The formation of a mob and its object was known to every one. Such things cannot be kept secret.

The knowledge of Gale's peril came to her as a painful shock. Her sympathies would have been aroused for any one threatened in like manner. They were acutely aroused for him.

She could not but remember his many courtesies on the stage journey, and his kindness on the perilous, ledgy trail. She liked to recall his visit to the house, after that, and the pleasant conversations held with him.

She did not try to deny to herself that Gale was an exceedingly handsome man; nor did she try to conceal the fact that her interest in him was of more than an ordinary kind.

She called it friendship. Whether she dreamed that this "friendship" might glide into love, or not, is as difficult to determine as it is to probe to the depths of a woman's heart.

One thing she knew. Gid Gale was in peril. The mob had gone with him toward the wild canyon. She did not doubt the result. He would be killed, as others had been killed; not because he was guilty, but because he was accused.

An excitement that bordered on insanity overwhelmed her, on the receipt of this information. A deathly pang stabbed her. Hardly knowing what she did, she rushed into the street, searching for father and for Beebe.

Farnall she found; and incoherently begged him to do something to save the threatened man.

There was nothing Farnall could do; and, observing that she was attracting attention, he led her home, and there talked with her in a manner tending to produce quiet.

After this first burst of excitement, Josie Farnall, realizing that she had pinned her heart too plainly on her sleeve, kept closely within the house.

She could weep there, if she desired, without being seen by prying and curious eyes.

She could even become frantic, and the walls would keep all knowledge of it from the people of the camp.

After a time she became calm enough to try to think, but the past seemed a hurly-burly. A number of figures arose plainly, each marked with its own characteristic. Had she been really insane she could not have forgotten them!

First of all in her thoughts was Gale; after which came Basil Brown.

Brown stalked through the nightmare of her visions like an unwelcome specter.

Brown had called on her that very evening—yet the time seemed ages remote. She could hardly believe his visit had been only a few hours before. And Gid Gale had been there; and Beebe Small!

All the incidents of the evening whirled dizzily; though they seemed as far away as the years of her childhood.

She had never liked Basil Brown. She felt, now, that she hated him. Her dislike was intense and furious; it was so fierce as to be almost unwomanly.

A sort of pity was mixed with her dislike of Beebe Small. A pity that was akin to contempt. Beebe's attentions, if they had so annoyed her, were beneath notice.

Even her thoughts came back to Gid Gale, no matter where drawn, as the needle swings back to the pole.

If he were dead—and she could hardly doubt it—a dim dream, whose meshes caught the events of the future, was hopelessly swept aside.

Almost unconsciously, she had been connecting the things that might probably happen in the future years with Gid Gale; with this man, who, only the other day, had been wholly unknown to her.

The life and the beauty, the music and the perfume, of all these years to come seemed to disappear. The future became a blank, filled with darkness.

She could not sit still at the window and look out on the garish lights of the town. She got up and paced the room. Back and forth, back and forth, she strode, with the soft tread of a cat.

Not a tear had come to her eyes. They were hot and dry. The fever of the first intense grief was still on her.

She heard the return of the galloping horsemen, which seemed to say that the murder had been done.

She heard the talk of the men in the street nearest the house, though the words were not distinct enough to be understood.

She was anxious to go again into the town and learn what she could; but she wisely restrained the impulse.

The minutes dragged like days.

Finally, she heard a step on the walk, followed by a knock at the door.

She went down, and met the messenger sent by Farnall.

"Your father will be here pretty soon with Mr. Gale! He sent me to inform you."

The man was a trusted friend of the family, whom Farnall knew he could rely on to be discreet.

But this man had no knowledge of Josie's feelings for the detective; and so blurted out his information; and then beat a hasty retreat.

Stunned and fairly reeling, Josie grasped the door for support, glad that the man had turned his back and did not witness the intensity of her emotions.

So great was the revulsion of feeling that she was, for a moment, too weak to close the door.

A thrill of happiness pervaded her entire being, and it seemed that a flood of light had been suddenly poured into the darkness that had weighted her down.

She could not doubt the word of the messenger, though the information he brought appeared too good to be true.

A thousand conjectures assailed her. How had Gale escaped the fury of the mob? Where had he met her father? Why was he coming there?

No adequate replies were at hand, of course.

She did not close the door, as her first impulse had directed, when her strength came back; but held it ajar and stared out through the gloom toward the lights of the town.

Her ears strained to catch the sounds of approaching feet.

Then she reflected that it would not seem proper for her to exhibit so intense an anxiety; and she pushed the door to and retreated into the room.

"He is alive! He is alive!" was the thought that arose, constantly.

It was more a prayer of thankfulness than an exclamation.

She trembled again, when the noise of steps reached her; and stood rigid, in the center of the room, waiting for the knock on the door.

She tried to quiet her feelings and compose her features. She did not desire that Gale should notice her too evident perturbation. She wished to seem as calm as if the occasion were but an ordinary one.

She succeeded fairly well, in this difficult task; and was outwardly at ease when the footsteps sounded in front of the door.

Instead of the anticipated knock, the knob was turned and the door pushed open; and Beebe Small danced into the room, bowing in Gid Gale.

"Our guest, for a time!" he said, addressing Josie. "You are acquainted with the gentleman. He hadn't any place else to go, and so he came here."

Josie flushed, in spite of her efforts at repression, and when Gale extended his hand, the hand she placed in his was limp and cold.

The detective was puzzled. He had hoped for a warmer reception.

"I am very glad to see you," she declared.

And, having said this, she covered her further confusion by drawing forward a chair, and by taking his hat and putting it away.

When she came back, she was again mistress of her feelings.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE GOLD-CAMP DETECTIVE AS A LOVER.

GID GALE was delighted with the thought of being constantly near the woman he loved, yet there was one bitter drop in the sweet draught. He disliked exceedingly to remain in hiding; to burrow out of sight like a badger, or like a thief afraid of the light of day.

However, it was the wisest and the only thing for him to do, all things considered. His public reappearance would set the mob to going again, in all likelihood.

Drayton, the attorney, gave him a call early in the morning.

No one knew, of course, when Drayton was seen to visit the house, that he went there to confer with Gid Gale. If any one had said that such was his mission, it would have been greeted with ridicule.

The presence of Beebe Small, and the knowledge he possessed were elements of danger to Gid Gale in a greater degree than the detective would have believed.

Beebe Small was in a constant fever of jealousy. Whenever he beheld Gale and Josie conversing, and it seemed to him they talked together a great deal more than was necessary—his anger kindled.

He had been willing to assist Gale, that he might be avenged on Basil Brown. He began to feel now that he had overreached himself. He began to think Gid Gale was the man who ought to be watched and guarded against, rather than the editor of the *Pine Bough*.

He had thought that before. But Beebe never hung to one opinion more than a day at a time. Even his fancied love for Josie Farnall became changed to hate, at least once in every twenty-four hours.

Gid Gale was sufficiently observant to detect the varying emotions that swayed the heart of the young man. Because of this he was made uneasy. He disliked Beebe's keen glances, when Beebe was in the house; and, when the young man was absent, he feared that jealousy might result in treachery.

But all this did not keep him from enjoying his conversations with Josie Farnall. Such another opportunity might not come in a hurry, and he was determined to make the most of it.

He had to tell her the story of the night, of course, in its minutest details, and together they pondered and vexed their brains over the question of who the unknown friend had been.

Josie was not willing to agree with Gale that it was Kansas Kate. She disliked Kansas Kate, chiefly because Kansas Kate had assiduously urged her to marry Basil Brown.

She was not willing to believe, either, that Kansas Kate and the horseman who had helped her on the slope were one and the same.

The detective hesitated a long time before he acquainted Josie with his belief on this point. He felt, though, that if he could not trust her there was no one whom he could trust.

These talks led to others. Confidences seldom go alone; and, almost before he was aware of it, Gid Gale was acquainting this exceedingly handsome young woman with many important details concerning his mission in Tangled Pine.

Strangely enough, he felt better, after each

confidence. His stories of his hopes and fears led to similar recitals on her part.

It seemed really remarkable how rapidly they progressed toward a lasting friendship, during the short hours of that day.

Never had a day seemed so short; notwithstanding the many things that might naturally be expected to lengthen it.

The night came, bringing no indications that the members of the late mob knew of the whereabouts of their intended victim.

Gale and Josie sat near an open window, and looked out over the town, from which the early lights twinkled.

The house was still. Beebe was absent; and Sam Farnall had recently left the place, intending to make further inquiries, and to finger, as well as he could, the ever-varying pulse of the public of Tangled Pine.

Something was said concerning Basil Brown.

Basil Brown's name had not figured much in the conversations of the day. Each seemed to avoid it.

Now, it stirred the detective to an uncommon boldness.

He reached over and took in one of his big palms the hand that rested nearest to him.

"I have been waiting to talk to you about Brown," he said, his tones showing considerable nervousness. "I have been told that he is a lover of yours."

"I hate him!" she declared, with sudden vehemence.

"But he is said to be a lover of yours."

"It is a mistake. I have no lover. Beebe tries to be gallant, sometimes; that is all."

She felt that she was flushing, and tried to draw away her hand.

"Is it all?" Gale questioned. "Is there no one else who has tried to be gallant? Is there no one else, in your opinion, who loves you—more than either Beebe or Basil Brown?"

"Father, I suppose," tapping the carpet with her feet. "One's father is supposed to think more of one than other people can."

This time she endeavored to release her fingers.

Gale clung to them the tighter.

"Not more than I can," he whispered, with an assurance that astonished him. "There's no one that can love you more than I do, Josie! No one!"

He heard her breath quicken and felt her hand tremble.

"I know I have not been acquainted with you long," he apologized. "It seems, though, that I have known you for years."

She did not venture a reply.

He drew her nearer, with slight resistance.

"I can hardly expect you to say you return this love," he went on, desperately. "That would be presuming too much. But you do care something for me, Josie? You regard me more highly than the ordinary stranger who chances your way? You— you?"

He stammered and grew confused.

Josie felt her cheeks burning like fire. Her breath came almost in gasps. She, with difficulty, kept herself from yielding to the embracing arm that drew her so tenderly.

"I do think more of you than of—than a mere stranger, certainly!" she admitted.

"You love me?" he pleaded. "Say that you love me, Josie! That is the only thing needed to make me the happiest man in the world. If you could—would—but say that, I should be able to forget that I have an enemy, or a sorrow. You do love me?"

"I fear too much!" was her trembling confession. "There—don't try to kiss me!" as he strove to snatch a kiss—"You must speak to father. Tell him what you have told me. Then—then, perhaps you may speak to me again! Perhaps we may—"

There came an interruption, in the shape of a loud outcry near the door. The sound of a struggle accompanied the outcry; and they heard Beebe's voice.

"What are you doing here?" Beebe exclaimed.

He seemed to have collared some one.

The interruption was most unpleasant for

the lovers, coming as it did at so critical a point in the conversation.

The detective leaped to his feet and moved toward the door.

Before he reached it, the door was thrown open, revealing Beebe and Silvertip.

The old man was not so much struggling, as he was protesting against what he termed an outrage.

"I'd have you know, young man, that I'm an independent American citizen, free to come and go as I want to! I've come over here on an errand, the character of which hain't none of your dog-goned business! It's very important, though, to the party concerned!"

At this instant, he caught sight of Gid Gale; and rolled, rather than walked, through the doorway into the house.

"Howdy!" he exclaimed, picking himself up and brushing awkwardly at his tattered clothing. "Howdy, pard! You remember our meetin' in the upper rooms of a certain building, not many hours ago? I froze to you, then; though the atmosphere was rather hot for freezing of any kind. I said to myself, 'he's my pard, from this on!' And, now, I've come to prove it!"

He combed the fingers of one hand through his matted beard, while he held his disreputable hat in the other.

Then, seeing Josie Farnall, he bowed so elaborately that his gray beard almost swept the floor.

"At your service, miss! There hain't nothin' warms my heart like the appearance of a handsome woman, 'ceptin' it's a glass o' good lickin'!"

Beebe had followed him into the house, mumbling and grumbling, and now closed the door.

The old man observed the movement.

"Our young friend, here, seems to be a sort of watch-dog. I came up the steps, shod with silence and so-forth, not wishing to disturb anybody, when he leaped out on me, just like a bow-wow!"

"But that's neither here nor there. I came to speak a word to this gentleman, Mr. Gale. If you have a private room somewhere—"

Gid Gale saw that the old man really had something he wished to communicate.

He looked hesitatingly at Josie Farnall, and also glanced at Beebe.

"You might step into that room, there," Josie suggested. "You would be quite alone, there, and Mr.—Mr. Silvertip could say what he liked, without danger of being heard."

Old Silvertip laughed.

"That's right!" he exclaimed. "Mr. Silvertip, it is. I hain't got any other name, jist at present. I'm an old bear, burrowing in whatever den I can find; and the name jist fits me. Mr. Silvertip! Hal' hal'!"

Gid Gale moved toward the room indicated by the girl; and the old man followed, cackling as if greatly amused.

When the room was reached, and he felt he could say what he desired, his manner changed. His face straightened and he became sober.

"I'm your friend," he asserted. "You haven't a better friend in town. For reasons of my own, of course! I don't mean to say that I love you any better than I love other men; only that I'm your friend, because it pleases me to be and fits into my plans. Being your friend, helps me! See?"

"And so I've come to give you warning. Some way or other, it's become known that you are here—that you are in this house. I heard it, and came straight here. I haven't a doubt that the mob will form again. Likely, it's forming now. I have brought you warning; do whatever you think is best."

Gid Gale was much disturbed by this revelation. Singular as had been the old man's actions, there was something, now, in his manner to indicate he was speaking the truth.

"Who gave out this information?" Gale questioned.

"I don't know. I don't care to know. I only give you facts. It's known you are here. If you propose to stay, I'll stay with you, and do what I can to help. If you proposed to run, the sooner you get your legs to going the better!"

CHAPTER XIX.

A DEADLY SCHEME.

A MORE disgusted man than the Terror of Tarantula never lived. All his elaborate plans had gone awry. In addition, he had been most ignominiously treated by the man whose death he hoped to compass.

He vanished into the gloom, after his unpleasant experience with Gid Gale, and walked toward the town, his sense of humiliation and indignation growing.

He was glad enough to escape with a whole skin. He did not understand how Gale had slipped out of the hands of the mob, and how Jeffreys had suffered in Gale's place. In fact, he was a very bewildered marshal, and saw nothing clearly.

His first effort was to hunt up Basil Brown and tell him what had occurred. Basil was not to be found, however.

The horsemen had come galloping into Tangled Pine in quite as muddled a mental state. About all they knew was that Gid Gale—they believed it to be Gid Gale!—had fled on Jeffreys's horse toward Tangled Pine.

To this knowledge, the marshal added the information he had so strangely gathered, although he did not give the story in all its details.

He had encountered Gale just on the outskirts of the town, he said. He had tried to arrest him; but Gale who was well armed, got the drop on him, and then managed to break away.

But Travers professed a certain belief that Gale was either in Tangled Pine, or crouching in some of the hollows near, at that very moment.

Thus stirred to renewed exertions, the members of the mob scattered through the town, seeking for Gale everywhere.

They did not find him; and the hours of the night, and of the ensuing day, passed without bringing them further knowledge.

But with the coming of another night came a startling report.

This report, which said that Gid Gale had taken refuge in Farnall's house, was brought to the marshal by one of his creatures, a disreputable bum who had lain half drunk not far from the Farnall residence throughout the greater portion of the afternoon. He had seen Gid Gale, and could not be mistaken.

This startling bit of news Travers bore to his chief, Basil Brown.

He found Basil Brown in that private upper room which had been searched so thoroughly by Old Silvertip, at the time of the fire.

Brown was in no enviable frame of mind. He was endeavoring to draw satisfaction, however, from the belief that the detective, whom he so feared and whose death he had tried to bring about, had fled from the vicinity of Tangled Pine; and he was trying, likewise, by specious reasoning, to convince himself that Gale would never return to the dangers of that locality.

He regretted greatly, though, the miscarriage of the plot against Gale's life. It had been such a promising plot, and it had fallen through so woefully.

Thus his thoughts were running, when the marshal made his appearance and was conducted into the room.

Brown saw at a glance that the Terror of Tarantula had something of importance to communicate. The Terror's unprepossessing face held a look of crafty wisdom, and the little snaky eyes, set so closely together, twinkled with a sort of serpentine stealth.

"What's up?" Brown questioned, when the door had closed behind Travers.

"He hain't gone!" said Travers, sinking into a seat. "He's in this hyer blessed town, this blessed minute. Hang me, if it hain't so! He's housed up at Farnall's."

He delivered the news with sundry winks and many nervous movements of his hands and feet.

Brown was staggered by it.

"You are sure of that?"

"Can't be no mistake!" said the Terror.

And then he proceeded to tell how he had come by his information.

Brown took a chair opposite, and furrowed his brow in thought.

"Better rout out the mob again, hadn't we?" he queried.

The marshal had been thinking that, though uncertain on the point.

"No, that won't do!" Brown declared, getting on his feet and pacing nervously about the room. "We must find a better plan. Let me see! Let me think!"

He started and glanced toward the door, fancying he heard a sound there.

"Only the wind, I guess!" the Terror assured.

Nevertheless Brown walked to the door, opened it, and looked out into the corridor.

The wind came through a window, blowing a curtain fitfully. The window he closed, and came back into the room. He was nervous and uneasy.

He would have been more nervous and uneasy if he could have seen the eyes that peered out at him from the other end of the corridor, while he was making that search.

He had really heard a sound near the door. Kansas Kate had gained admission to the house almost on the heels of the marshal. She had come in with the stealth of a burglar, and had fled backward along the corridor, with almost the lightness of a feather, when Brown's suspicions were aroused, and he placed his hand on the door-knob.

There was a hat-rack, holding an overcoat, at that point, which she dived behind, and, thus screened, with the added shelter of the gloom reigning there, escaped detection.

Still her breath came hurriedly, and the perspiration stood on her face. It was a trying ordeal. If Brown had stepped in that direction, with the intention of making an investigation, she could not have got away.

An audible sigh arose when Brown went back into the room, and then, her courage returning, she tip toed once more toward the door.

She knew Travers was in the room with Brown, and she was resolved to hear what they were saying.

Kansas Kate had spent a good deal of time in shadowing Basil Brown, and seemed never to tire of it.

"Better not try the mob, I think!" Brown said, recurring to the subject under discussion. "It's unreliable; and, besides, if we do, there'll be a counter movement in Gale's favor. There's a good many men in the town who won't believe he had anything to do with that fire. They're increasing in numbers, too. We can't afford to split the town into factions and precipitate a fight."

He clasped his hands behind his back, and walked up and down the room with heavy, impatient stride.

It was man minutes before he spoke again. Then he turned about, with a suddenness that surprised the Terror, and with a sparkle in his eye that was equally surprising.

"You'll have to get together a company of men and 'protect' him! As the marshal of the camp, it's your duty to do that. When you know where he is, and know the danger he is in, your official oath will compel you to take steps to secure his safety!"

Travers did not exactly comprehend the drift of all this; but he gave a solemn wink, to indicate that it was as clear to him as day.

"I'll 'perfect' him, if you say so! I'll organize a band that'll be kinder to him than his own mammy!"

Basil Brown recommenced his restless tramp. The scheme he was revolving seemed to require much thought.

Again he turned to the marshal.

"Of course, if you're there in charge of the house, to see that he is not disturbed, you will have charge of everything. You will see that his meals are cooked there, as you may direct!—no, you will bring them there already cooked!"

"Let's see! How can that be worked? Yes; you can have meals brought over from Kansas Kate's restaurant. You, and some of your men can eat at the table with him. You can manage to muddy his coffee a little!"

He looked keenly at Travers, to ascertain how much that individual understood of what was being said.

Travers was plainly puzzled.

"Muddy his coffee? I thought likely you'd want me to stick a knife into him, on the sly?"

"That would be a bit too reckless, now, wouldn't it Travers? A thing like that couldn't be attributed to accident. There's

risk in this other; but not so great a risk as that would be.

"By muddying his coffee, I meant, drop something into it. Something that I can prepare. Something I'll give you for the purpose."

"If you could work it just right it would end him; and, I hope, in a way that would not create suspicion. I know of a preparation—indeed I have some of it in the house—which, if given to any one, in that way, will produce death, apparently by heart disease. A drop will do the work; and it's so subtle in its effect that the best doctor in the land is liable to be fooled by it."

The Terror of Tarantula gazed, with unfeigned admiration, on his chief. Scheming such as this was far beyond the power of his own mental faculties; and, therefore, the more admirable in his eyes. It accorded, too, with his desires and impulses. It was even better than stabbing a man in the back.

Basil Brown stepped to a closet and took from it a vial, which he brought to the table whereon the lamp rested. He held the vial up so that it and its contents might be clearly seen.

Travers gazed at it with much interest.

There was, likewise, another, peering through the keyhole, who looked on the vial, almost breathlessly.

"It's as colorless as water," Brown commented, shaking the contents. "And it's odorless and tasteless. Just a drop of it would do the work."

The vial seemed to have a strange fascination for him; and he stood gazing on it for many seconds, turning it round and round, as if admiring it.

"There's the danger of being seen," Travers reminded. "There'll be other people at the table, you know."

"I think you can work it. If you can't bribe some of the waiters, you'll have to play waiter yourself. That would be the safest."

He dropped nervously into his chair, and looked at his confederate, with much earnestness.

"If you're willing to undertake it, Travers, I believe I can plan the whole thing so that it will be perfectly safe. The only question is, will you undertake it?"

Travers fidgeted uneasily, when brought to this test.

"I'll do it!" he finally declared. "Just arrange it so that I won't run any risk, and I'll work the trick for you!"

Brown's influence over the Terror always prevailed.

"Very well," and Brown got up and placed the vial on the shelf from which he had taken it. "The first thing to do is to get a company of men who can be relied on as a protective force. I'll go out with you and help you pick these men."

Again Kansas Kate disappeared from the door; and, when Brown and Travers left the room, she was nowhere to be seen.

CHAPTER XX.

BEEBE *versus* BROWN.

OLD SILVERTIP'S warning to the Gold-Camp Detective came an hour or more later than this conference between Brown and Travers.

After delivering it, the old man vanished from the house, in spite of his declaration that he would remain with the detective.

But the predicted mob did not appear; and the time slipped by until midnight. Then Sam Farnall came home with an account that corroborated Silvertip's story.

After a conference with Farnall, the detective concluded he would be as safe there in the house as anywhere.

Just before daybreak, Travers's protecting force made its appearance.

They approached the building with the stealth of cats; and surrounded it, to make sure the detective could not break away. They knew he was still in the house; for spies had been watching it all night.

Travers came forward, with hypocritical professions of friendship; and, at the same time, his men showed themselves, at various points.

"As marshal of the camp," and he smiled treacherously, when he had been admitted to the house, "I thought it my bounden duty

to see that you wasn't dragged out by the mob, as you was last night. There's a mob a-getherin', and they're wild to hang ye. But I'll see that you're pertected from 'em, if I die for it!"

His little eyes shone snakily, and met, with difficulty, those of Gid Gale.

"I should think you would be my very friend, indeed, after what occurred last night!" Gale asserted, with some scorn.

"Duty always before anything else!" declared the marshal. "I let bygones be bygones. I don't think you treated me jist right, but that's neither here nor there. You're in danger, and it's my duty to protect you. And, by the great horn spoons, I'll do it!"

"I've got my men out there; and they're under orders to stand up fer ye against any mob that may try to do you harm. Them's their orders, and they'll obey 'em!"

The coming of Travers and his men was like a dash of cold water on the spirits of all within the house. The detective was rendered uneasy, and a wild fear assailed the heart of Josie Farnall.

However, no exceptions could be taken to the pretensions of the marshal. If a mob was forming, as was claimed, it was his duty to stand by the threatened man, with all the power at his command.

But the feeling remained, and grew, that the presence of this "protecting" force was but one move in a game that was being played by Travers and Basil Brown.

The character of that game Gid Gale could not guess. No one could have divined it, under the circumstances.

Beebe, who had quite recovered from the effects of his fall, was as little pleased by the turn of events as any one. He had been out of the house a great deal, during the later hours of the night; and had chanced to overhear a portion of a talk between Travers and Brown that tended to drive him frantic.

That talk concerned Josie Farnall. In it, Brown had been so incautious as to speak of Beebe as a presumptuous fool, who aspired to heights beyond his reach.

"And that, after all I've done for him!" Beebe growled. "After the risks I've run and the crimes I've done! I'm true to him no more! If I'd taken a dozen oaths, not one of them should bind me. He's my enemy, from this on;—my bitter enemy! I'll—I'll—"

He fumed and frothed, like a hydrophobic cur, unable to conclude the sentence, or to put into words the horrible deeds he contemplated.

With these thoughts burning in his mind Beebe, had returned to the house, where he wandered about, uneasy as a bear, until the arrival of Travers's protecting force.

As it chanced, Travers and his men were scarcely located comfortably in and about the Farnall house when Basil Brown came through the gate from the direction of the camp.

The day was just breaking. The shadows hung heavily in the hollows between the mountains.

Brown had probably come to get a word with his lieutenant, the Terror of Tarantula; but Beebe was certain he had come to pay court to Josie Farnall.

He recalled the words he had heard so recently. Every sentence, uttered by Brown on that occasion, he had treasured in memory.

And now, when he saw this enemy come through the gate and turn toward the house, all the bottled hate that had bubbled so poisonously overflowed.

In spite of the oaths of which he had spoken, this was not the first time he had thought to lift his hand against Basil Brown.

He placed a hand in the breast of his coat, where it rested for an instant against a loaded revolver.

The hand came out, however; a deep sigh welled from Beebe's massive chest, and a feeling of revulsion shook him. He felt as if he had suddenly stepped on the edge of a precipice, from which he had drawn back with difficulty.

"I'm just about crazy!" was his mental admission. "God! If I had pulled that revolver on Brown!"

It was not so much a dread of the crime contemplated as of the consequences of that

crime, which caused him to thus tremble. If he had shot Brown, there, he could not have escaped detection. The mob that had howled around the detective would howl as loudly around him.

"I'll spoil his beauty for him, anyway! I'll set his head to buzzing so that he won't have sense enough to talk to Josie or any one. I'll—"

He picked up a club that lay near and crept with much stealth along the edge of the path which Brown was ascending.

He believed he was not seen; but in this he was mistaken.

Suspecting no danger, Brown came up the path, at an easy gait, his thoughts absorbed in the plans recently made for the removal of Gid Gale. It was his intention to have a talk with Gale and to pretend the warmest sympathy and friendship for him.

A scrubby tree gave to Beebe Small the shelter he desired. Within its shadows he crouched, holding the club in readiness.

It was his plan to batter and bruise Basil Brown, but not to inflict on him any serious injury.

Brown's feet crunched on the walk opposite the tree, and Beebe leaped forth, swinging his weapon.

Even as he did so, the hand of another, who had followed close after him, reached out for the club.

The hand did not grasp the club; but it fell on Beebe's shoulder, and turned him half round as he was in the act of delivering the blow.

The club slipped from his fingers; and, flying like a stone from a catapult, struck Basil Brown in the chest and knocked him over.

In the same moment, Beebe was hurled to the ground.

"So it's you, Beebe Small, is it?" was snarled, in the voice of Old Silvertip. "It's you that creeps like an assassin and strikes an honest man? Help! Help, Mr. Brown! He'll get away from me!"

Brown was not stunned by the fall, but he was in no condition to come to Silvertip's assistance; and, as Silvertip had not sufficient strength to hold the young man, Beebe writhed out of his arms and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW THE SCHEME WORKED.

"I'm waitin' fer hash time," said Silvertip, in reply to the question of some one, who was probably of the opinion that Silvertip ought to be anywhere except at the residence of Sam Farnall.

"Yes, I reckon you kin make a full hand, then!" was the growling comment.

Old Silvertip had come on to the house shortly after his struggle with Beebe Small; and had remained there a portion of the time, ever since.

But, with the coming of daylight, he had not made himself conspicuous. Rather, his desire appeared to be to screen himself as much as possible from the public gaze. He kept to the dark corners of the room and avoided conversation.

"You bet, I'm waitin' fer hash time!" he commented, as his questioner moved away; and he wiped his mouth, greasily, as if enjoying the food, in anticipation.

Bums of Silvertip's class do not sit down to square meals any too often; and the opportunity, which seemed here to present itself, no doubt he thought he ought to improve.

No one seemed to observe how closely he eyed those who moved about the room; how he listened to every scrap of talk that fell from the lips of Travers's men.

Orders for one of the best breakfasts to be had in Tangled Pine had been placed at the well-known restaurant of Kansas Kate; and the employees of that institution were doing their utmost to execute the commission in a manner to cover the house with honor and glory. Such orders were not frequently given, and they felt they must make the most of this.

Of course Travers was, to all appearances, a very busy man. A great responsibility appeared to rest on his shoulders. As the "protector" of Gid Gale, he issued many orders and kept messengers skurrying about

in a very business like manner. His care and diligence could not be criticized.

"Any one ignorant of the facts would think me a person of much importance, surrounded by a guard of honor!" the detective remarked to Josie Farnall. "There's altogether too much fuss and feathers to please me. There's more in this 'protecting' business than appears on the surface. I sometimes doubt if I'm at all threatened by a mob."

When breakfast was brought over from Kansas Kate's, and all the preparations were complete, the Terror took his place among the waiters.

Kansas Kate was not there. Indeed she had not been seen at all that morning. No one inquired why she was not at her usual place of business, or where she was. Seemingly, she was not needed. The well-trained subordinates went forward with their work, without the need of supervision.

The company of "protectors" crowded about the table, joking and laughing. Edging in with them was the old tramp, Silvertip. The square meal for which he had waited was ready for his watering mouth.

Next to Silvertip—whether by accident or design, did not appear—sat Gid Gale, the Gold-Camp Detective; and, at Gale's right hand, was the woman he loved.

Gale was trying to be the merriest of the merry, though he was plainly uneasy. In all his experience he had never encountered anything like the happenings of that hour. He was puzzled. He knew the "protectors" were his enemies, not his friends; yet he could not fathom the game they were playing.

The others at the table seemed to suspect nothing. The men who were obeying Travers appeared to know little enough of the plans of their chief.

In spite of his pretended gayety, Travers was uneasy. The crucial moment had arrived; and he greatly feared the elaborately planned scheme might not pan out just as it was intended.

He had the vial up his sleeve, ready to draw the cork and drop a portion of the contents into Gale's coffee when the proper time arrived.

The arm and hand trembled; and more than once, as he moved about, laughing and talking in his rough way, the tiny vial came near dropping from its place of concealment to the floor.

Each time, when this happened, he shivered and recoiled, very much as if he had trod upon a serpent.

If that poison had dropped from his sleeve the vial would have been shattered. Discovery might have come. At any rate, the scheme against Gale would have ended, then and there.

It was not an easy thing to pour a portion of the poison into the coffee as it was being served. Travers did it, however, though with much clumsiness. But he believed he was not seen; and the clumsiness did not matter, so that the deed was done.

To make sure that no mistake could occur, he placed the poison cup at Gale's plate, himself.

Then he took a chair at the opposite side of the table, where he could watch the result.

He scarcely did so, when he paled, and trembled violently.

Old Silvertip reached over and deliberately exchanged Gale's cup of coffee for his own.

"Beg your pardon," he said, meeting Gale's stare with a gentle look, "but they've put too dratted much sweetnin' in mine, and I don't think yours has had any, yet! You like sweet coffee, eh? Most people do, who are used to it!"

The incident would not have gone as unnoticed as it did if there had not been so much talking. The protectors were a noisy lot and were bandying many compliments.

Gale seemed on the point of resenting the act of Old Silvertip; but he desisted from this intention and quietly accepted the exchange.

The Terror from Tarantula was almost falling out of his chair. So bewildered was he he could hardly think. He glared at Old Silvertip as if he longed to snatch him from his seat and beat him to pieces against the wall.

"Was that done by Old Silvertip, because

of some knowledge he possessed of the character of the contents of the cup?" was the question Travers asked himself.

The thing seemed impossible. It was plainly only a freakish idea of the old bum, which caused him to exchange cups in that unheard-of and outlandish manner.

Travers knew not what to do. He could not get up and forcibly re-exchange the cups.

He was on the point of ordering the bum from the table; and probably would have done so had not Silvertip lifted the coffee-cup to his lips and swallowed half its contents at a gulp.

The Terror from Tarantula paled more than ever.

Basil Brown had told him that the subtle poison would take effect in a very few minutes; and he horrifiedly gazed at the tramp, expecting to see him tumble over.

It was too late to undo what had been done. The cup intended for Gale had been swallowed by Silvertip. Silvertip would pay the penalty.

It was quite plain, now, to the marshal that Silvertip, in making that exchange, had been wholly unaware of what he was really doing. He had been impelled only by an ignorant and ungentlemanly impulse.

"There must have been a fly in that stuff!" Silvertip exclaimed, looking at what remained of the coffee. "It makes me feel sickish. Gentlemen, I guess I don't want any more of these here victuals. I've been counting on a bang-up breakfast, but I'll have to forego it. If you'll excuse me—"

He arose abruptly, pushed back his chair and quitted the room, going into the other part of the house.

Travers's snaky eyes followed him with singular fascination.

"He'll be a dead man in less'n two minutes!" Travers thought. "Gee-whil-likins! That was a mistake! A powerful bad mistake for him. Yes, and fer me and Brown. Curse the luck!"

Gid Gale looked after the retreating bum with mild curiosity, then glanced at Travers; and was astonished at the look he beheld in Travers's face.

All the mingled emotions so powerfully affecting the marshal were depicted there, though not sufficiently plain to be read by Gale. He saw that Travers was much disturbed; saw that the bum had something to do with it; but could give no adequate reasons therefor.

Then Gale observed the half-empty coffee cup, recalled the exchange that had been made, and whitened even more than the marshal had whitened.

"Something crooked here!" he mused. "I'll look into it."

CHAPTER XXII.

A REQUEST FROM THE DEAD.

GID GALE was anxious to immediately follow Old Silvertip; but a minute or two elapsed before he could find any ready excuse to leave the table.

And, when he went into the other parts of the house, he was uncertain whether Silvertip had gone into one of the rooms or had left the premises.

Knowing that he could see the road leading to the town from his own room up stairs, he hurried thither; and, when he had crossed the threshold, he stopped, in horrified astonishment.

To this room Old Silvertip had retreated; and now lay on Gid Gale's bed, apparently lifeless.

About all that could be seen of his features was his white beard and hair. He looked more bear-like than ever, curled on the bed in that unnatural attitude.

"Dead, as sure as anything!" Gale ejaculated, crossing the room with quick steps.

He stopped, in even deeper astonishment, when he saw, in the fingers of the right hand, a note addressed to himself.

Without an instant's hesitation, Gale plucked the note away, opened, and read it.

"DEAR GALE:—I have been given some deadly poison and feel that I am dying. Avenge me. But, as you love me, do not let any sawbones carve me up. Bury me quietly; let me sleep peacefully; and go for Travers and Brown! SILVERTIP."

These were the singular words read by the detective.

Gale thrust the note into a pocket and felt of the pulseless wrist.

He could not doubt that Silvertip was dead. The poisoned coffee had done its work with speed. He did not know what to do. There was something in the note which indicated that Silvertip wanted the method of his death kept secret. This was indicated in the closing lines:

"Go for Travers and Brown!" Silvertip's dying fingers had traced.

"I'll do that!" Gale exclaimed. "That poison was meant for me. Instead, it took the life of this old tramp. Why did he exchange his cup for mine? Does fate play such tricks with mortals?"

He did not spend many moments in thought; only enough to read the note and satisfy himself that Silvertip was indeed a dead man; then he opened the door and called to the people below.

Travers, who had been on tenter-hooks for these many minutes, responded instantly to the call; and a number of Travers's men tumbled up the stairs at his heels.

"What is it?" Travers gasped, poking his head through the doorway.

"A dead man, as you can see!" Gale responded, eying Travers so keenly that the latter was forced to turn away his face. "It's Old Silvertip. He crawled away here, and died like a poisoned rat. He was at the table, just a minute ago, you remember!"

The astonishing fact of Old Silvertip's death spread over the house, with the rapidity of lightning. Every one seemed to know it at once, and to be talking about it.

There was a steady "tramp, tramp" of feet ascending and descending the stairs; and it was the general opinion that so sudden a death had not been heard of in many a year.

A doctor was summoned, who, after making a hasty examination; looked very grave and very wise, and pronounced the trouble "heart disease."

Then many people remembered that the old tramp had looked very much like a man suffering from that malady; and sundry predictions, which had never been made, were set forth to the effect that they knew he could not live long.

Hind-sight prophets multiply at such times in the strangest way!

Gid Gale took a position in the room commanding a view of the bed, and remained there, narrowly watching all that was done.

A disturbed and feverish feeling possessed him. A sort of horror took hold of his mind.

He could but realize that Old Silvertip had died in his place! He did not dream that it was possible the old man had done so purposely. It was one of those queer, and unaccountable happenings or accidents—call them what you may—that now and then occur.

If Old Silvertip had not changed those cups, the poisoned coffee would have been swallowed by Gid Gale; and Gale would now be lying in that inanimate condition.

Little wonder, therefore, that a chill of dismay and fear shook the stout heart of the Gold-Camp Detective.

Here was evidence, of the most positive character, that his enemies were masters of craft and duplicity.

He recalled the occurrences of the past few hours. The presence of the protecting force. The bustling officiousness of the marshal, who, usurping a waiter's place, had brought on those cups of coffee.

It was as plain as daylight, to Gale, that a damnable plot had been aimed at his life; and that only by the strangest chance had it miscarried.

The note in his pocket, written by the old man, seemed to rustle, as if endowed with life.

"I'll see that every wish of his is carried out!" was the detective's stern resolve.

He did not understand the request, in every respect; but that did not matter.

Sam Farnall came into the room, an anxious look in his face. The look partially vanished, when he beheld Gid Gale.

"I'm glad you're here," he said, speaking to the detective. "I want you to take charge of the arrangements for burying the old man!

—that is I want you to help me take charge of the arrangements."

He turned about and requested the other occupants of the room to go below stairs.

When this had been done, the coroner came in, with a few of Sam Farnall's friends and cronies.

No formal investigation into the cause of the old man's death was made. The coroner simply looked at the body on the bed, and soon after departed.

That afternoon, a rude box, bearing the remains of Silvertip, was buried in the little graveyard, on the hill above Tangled Pine; and what had been the sensation of the day seemed likely to be quickly forgotten.

Not many mourners followed the body to its last resting place;—not many of any sort, mourners or otherwise. Sam Farnall and a few of his friends took on themselves the work of the undertaker and sexton.

Now that the scheme, from which Travers and Basil Brown had hoped so much, had failed, the farce of maintaining a protecting force at Farnall's residence began to grow irksome.

This became apparent to Gale, before the day wore away. A number of the men disappeared. Travers, however, remained on duty.

Gale took occasion to place himself in Travers's way.

Choosing a time and place where they were not likely to be overheard, he confronted the marshal, with flashing eyes.

Travers recoiled. He had a lively recollection of his encounter with Gale in the outskirts of the town, and did not care for a repetition of that humiliating experience.

"I don't intend to hurt you!" Gale assured, with a sneer. "You are perfectly safe, Travers! I only want to tell you one thing!"

He lifted a finger and shook it in a tantalizing way.

"You did that! You poisoned that coffee; you killed Old Silvertip; and you intended to kill me! Only Silvertip's actions made him the victim and made your plan miscarry!"

Travers drew still further back, gasping and protesting his innocence.

"I have proof of what I say!" Gale asserted. "I know just what I am talking about. That was a scheme hatched in the brain of Basil Brown, and which you endeavored to carry out."

"No such—"

Travers was stopped in his denial.

"I just want to say to you that I'll spring this proof on you, if you don't carry yourself straight. As I told you, once before, I have friends in this camp. Probably you know it, by this time. Are you sensible enough to accept a word of warning?"

Having delivered this threat, he went back into the house, satisfied it would not be without its effect.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BASIL BROWN PLANS TO PLAY ANOTHER TRUMP.

"Such luck! Such luck! Raked in the wrong man! Who'd have dreamed of a mischance like that?"

Basil Brown walked up and down in his office, as on that previous occasion, addressing his words to the Terror from Tarantula.

"But I'm glad Old Silvertip's out of the way. If there had to be a mistake, I'm glad it struck him. He was a treacherous old scoundrel. I don't know what he had against me, or what he was up to; but I caught him rummaging among the papers in my office, only yesterday, and discharged him. He was a fraud, anyway, as a printer. Wasn't there, half the time; and couldn't set type worth shucks!"

Perhaps Old Silvertip had been in the office long enough to demonstrate his incapacity, though he certainly had been there only a few hours.

Basil Brown exhibited no signs of his encounter with Beebe Small. The restraining hand of Old Silvertip had saved him from anything like serious injury.

He continued his comments; and they showed that he was greatly worried at the failure of this second plan against the life of Gid Gale.

Not only that; he was intensely annoyed by Drayton's latest movements.

The announcement had gone forth that Drayton was a candidate for the legislature; and that a paper, a rival of the *Tangled Pine Bough*, was to be issued immediately to boom Drayton's candidacy.

As if all these things were not enough to depress the spirits of Basil Brown, Josie Farnall had treated his latest attentions with impatient scorn.

"Is there anything we can do?" Brown questioned, turning suddenly on Travers. "The mistake, of course, can't be undone; and there's no use trying to work that scheme again. The fellow is on his guard, as he told you!"

"Hain't no use tryin' to do anything, as I can see!" was the Terror's gloomy comment.

"No use, either, of keepin' that gang of men up there."

"I can give out there's no further danger of a mob, and send the men away."

That this was really true—that the mob-spirit had passed—was a galling fact to both the marshal and Basil Brown.

They knew that Drayton and Farnall and a number of others had openly announced their advocacy of the cause of the threatened man; and they knew, too, that this advocacy had done more than anything else to make, for Gid Gale, friends and adherents.

"You're right," said Brown. "We can't do anything. We're stuck! The only thing, now, is to wait the course of events. Something will likely happen to give us the upper hand again. If it don't—"

"What?" said Travers.

"We're in the worst kind of danger. You and I, and all the rest of the gang!"

He continued his nervous walk, and Travers sat in moody silence.

"But I'll humble her!" Brown muttered, half to himself and half aloud. "It will do me good to bring down her pride. She's getting to be entirely too peacockish, of late!"

"That's because she's fallen in love with Gid Gale. He's a younger man than I am and a handsomer, and—"

A fierce scowl swept over his face. Gid Gale was blocking his path at every turn.

"I'll move on Farnall's mine, and take it from him. When she's reduced to beggary—"

Again he broke off his sentence and tramped gloomily up and down the room.

"When she's reduced to beggary, she'll see how much Gid Gale will care for her. He sees there's a fortune in that mine, if it's properly worked, and he hopes to get hold of that fortune. Well, he'll never get it. He may get the girl, but he'll never get the mine!"

Without paying any heed to the Terror from Tarantula, who regarded him furtively, Brown went to a desk and took out some papers.

One of them he glanced over, with much care.

It was the deed for the Heather Bell Mine, which Farnall, believing it a mortgage, had been weak enough to give him in return for a few hundred dollars.

"It will take a pretty good lawyer to pick holes in it. A better lawyer than Drayton is. And I guess I'm as able to hire good legal talent as any one!"

"That's strong enough to justify me in taking the mine by force. I'll demand the money, and of course it won't be paid. He can't pay it! Then, I'll move on the mine. Once it's in possession, he'll have to begin the legal fighting."

The manner in which Josie Farnall had treated his protestations of love seemed to sting him more than anything else.

"Yes, I'll humble her!" he continued to growl, as he put the paper away and locked the drawer.

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEEBE SMALL PRANCES TO THE FRONT.

A RING of rifle-fire girt in the Heather Bell Mine.

Determined men lay on the rocky slope, shielding themselves behind bowlders and within rude rifle-pits. All were well armed, and resolved to hold the mine to the last.

In command was Sam Farnall.

Basil Brown had undertaken to carry out

his plan of revenge. He had sought to wrest the Heather Bell Mine from Sam Farnall, thinking thus to crush the pride of the woman who had scorned him.

It was a mean spirit that moved him. The spirit of a fiend incarnate.

But all things did not work so smoothly as Basil Brown anticipated.

There was one man in charge of the mine, during the hours of the night, whom he had thought to bribe. He had fancied it would be no difficult task to get this man to let a force into the mine.

But, in this, he was mistaken. The man had rejected the bribe and communicated instantly with Farnall; and the result was that, before Basil Brown could recover from his surprise, Farnall had arms in the hands of his workmen, and those workmen stationed as a guard about the mouth of the mine.

The Heather Bell did not have a perpendicular shaft. On the contrary a horizontal drift opened into the side of the mountain, cutting the metal-bearing vein many feet below the surface. Cars ran in and out on a tramway, instead of being hoisted.

Within this opening, which resembled in many respects a cave, supplies were hastily carried, consisting of provisions, water and ammunition; and everything was made ready for withstanding a long siege.

Beebe Small, eccentric, changeable and unreliable as ever, was with Sam Farnall's force. With any force, Beebe must have been a weakening element; for no dependence whatever could be put in him.

However, Beebe was one of the most active in making everything secure against an assault. He was as strong as an ox; and lent this immense strength in lifting heavy rocks and placing them in position in the hastily-constructed breastworks.

Basil Brown had thought to gain possession of the Heather Bell, and force its rightful owner to begin legal proceedings to oust him.

But the tables were turned. The Heather Bell was held by Farnall; and an action to dispossess Farnall would now have to be commenced by Brown.

Either that, or he would be forced to carry the mine by stratagem or assault.

Farnall fully expected an attack.

He was, seemingly, justified in this expectation. On the mountain slope, further down, crouched another semicircle of armed men, representing the force of Basil Brown.

They had made one dash, half-way up the hillside; but had fallen back; and were now resting quietly in their places of concealment.

They had made this dash under cover of a heavy fog, that had now partly rolled away.

Taking advantage of the rising of the fog, Beebe Small had climbed to the pinnacle of a tall rock, and was surveying the men grouped lower down the side of the mountain.

His eyes lighted, with a fiendishness that was akin to insanity, when they fell on Basil Brown, who was conferring with the leader of the force.

Basil Brown and this leader had withdrawn themselves from their men; and were conversing earnestly, pointing now and then in the direction of the mine.

Any one beholding the glance that Beebe cast on Brown, or hearing the words that dropped, with semi-incoherence, from his lips, would have said that Beebe Small was a maniac, rather than a half-idiot.

He lifted his rifle, once, and leveled it at Brown's head. Then he put the rifle down, while a crazy smile overspread his face.

"It would be a beautiful trick!" he mused, slipping down from the rock, and moving quietly toward Brown and the man. "A most beautiful trick! Better than killing him! If I should kill him, he wouldn't know who done it, and I wouldn't get any satisfaction out of it. Who knows? Maybe one of his own men 'll shoot him!"

He threw away the rifle, as he skurried on; and slipped, with much dexterity, from rock to rock.

By taking advantage of a furrow-like depression, he saw he would be able to reach Brown without bringing himself into view of any of Brown's men.

As for the leader, with whom Brown was talking, Beebe appeared scarcely to take him into his calculations.

However, he picked up a club, as he had done in the gloom of the garden; and his eyes shone as balefully as on that occasion.

There was no Silvertip near to reach forth a restraining hand and draw him back from his murderous intentions. Old Silvertip, who had protected Brown, lay in his premature grave, through Brown's scheming.

There was a rustle in a bush, just at the right of Basil Brown and his confederate; and the latter turned his gaze in that direction.

But it was not quick enough. Beebe Small, clothed in his customary fantastic fashion, leaped out of the bush with the springy bound of a mountain lion; and the confederate fell heavily under a blow from the club.

Brown cried out and tried to draw a weapon; but he was not given time.

Beebe cast down the club, rushed upon Brown and lifted him bodily from his feet. He held him thus, in a bear-like hug, and backed with him up the slope.

A cry arose from Brown for help; and a score of rifles were instantly pointed in that direction. But not one belched its contents.

Basil Brown, writhing and kicking like a meshed grasshopper, served as a shield, at which the riflemen dared not fire. They could only reach Beebe by firing their bullets through Basil Brown's body.

Two of Brown's men leaped up and would have hurried to the rescue of their chief; but a shower of rifle-balls caused them to drop back and desist from their purpose.

Brown was bawling lustily; and on each side the excitement was intense. Heads and bodies were recklessly exposed.

As for Beebe, he backed steadily up the slope, with Brown hugged against his breast, showing not the slightest trepidation. He knew the shots of his enemy could not harm him.

Having gained the mouth of the mine, he began to call for a rope, not forgetting, however, to hold Brown before him as a shield.

The rope was forthcoming, instantly. Willing hands came with it, and, in a trice, Basil Brown was securely tied.

CHAPTER XXV.

BEEBE SEES A GHOST.

BASIL BROWN was hopelessly caught, and in a manner he had not anticipated. No one had anticipated it! It was the freakish result of a cranky impulse.

However, now that the capture had occurred and Brown was in his possession, Sam Farnall was not indisposed to take what advantage of it he could.

He even proceeded to praise Beebe for his shrewdness and skill.

"This is an outrage, for which I'll hold you responsible!" Brown declared, writhing in rage. "You compliment that idiot for what he has done. It's something you'll all regret, before you're a day older. I'll not forget such an insult as this!"

If Basil Brown hoped to scare Sam Farnall by threats and swelling words, he was mistaken. There had been a time in which Farnall would have crouched submissively under the commands of this man. That time was past. He had cast down the gauntlet, was in open rebellion, and was willing to accept all the risks.

"That's all right," answered Farnall. "I've got you just where I want you. Whether you get away or not, depends on what promises you are willing to make."

He beckoned to some of his men; and Brown was hoisted to the top of a big rock, that stood in front of the mouth of the mine.

"You are like a city set on a hill, that cannot be hid!" Farnall commented. "Your men can see you, without any trouble; and even the people of the camp, if they'll look real hard. I've no doubt that, with a good glass, you might be seen from Bull Mountain!"

His object in thus hoisting Brown to the top of the rock was to show that unamiable

individual how thoroughly he was in the toils.

Brown was as much a shield, now, for all, set up thus before the mouth of the mine, as he had been a shield for the person of Beebe Small.

The desultory rifle firing ceased. Indeed, only a shot or two had been exchanged since Brown's capture.

"You can call off those men, if you will," said Farnall, addressing his enemy. "You may as well make up your mind to do it. You won't be helped off that rock till you do!"

Brown stooped over and whispered:

"I acknowledge you have got me foul. I'll draw off my men, Farnall, and let you keep the mine, if you'll honestly use your good offices with Josie in my behalf. Honestly, you understand!"

"I'm not making promises," was the defiant reply. "I'm making demands. Whenever you get ready to tell your men to leave this place, I'll have you taken down from the rock, and sent home without injury. Till then, you can sit up there!"

Brown purpled and twisted uneasily; and this uneasiness was increased by the low cheer with which Farnall's men greeted the words of their leader.

Beebe Small heard all that was said and beheld all that was done. He was not altogether pleased, however. He delighted in the humiliation of his enemy; and chuckled in great glee when Brown was hoisted to the top of the rock. But he was not pleased by this talk of releasing Brown.

If Brown could have been kept there an hour or two, grilling in the sun, and could have met death at the end of that time from the rifles of one of his own men, it is probable Beebe Small would have been entirely satisfied. But nothing short of that would answer.

After being badgered and threatened for an hour or more, Basil Brown yielded, and consented to withdraw his men; whereupon, Beebe Small retreated, in a high dudgeon, into the interior of the mine.

There Beebe remained, miserable and sulky, throughout the remainder of the day, scarcely knowing what was taking place outside.

Brown's men returned to the camp; and the force that Sam Farnall had gathered to defend the Heather Bell was much reduced in numbers. All these things, however, went almost unknown to Beebe Small.

No work was done that day in the mine. There had been too much excitement for that. Everything was still in an uncertain state. A thousand guesses were hazarded as to the next move of Basil Brown.

And so the day wore away and the night came; and Beebe Small still hid himself in the black galleries, refusing to be comforted.

Sam Farnall did not trouble himself about Beebe's actions. Beebe was given to these fits of sulkiness. Once he had absented himself from home for a whole week; and no one knew how he had existed or passed the time.

What terrible plans of revenge Beebe concocted during those long hours will never be known. He harbored a thousand impracticable schemes. He fumed against Farnall and Josie almost as much, at times, as against Basil Brown; and the reader may be sure that Gid Gale did not escape.

Crouching and peering through the gloom, like an Eskimo in his igloo during the long-solar night, Beebe Small was given a scare that almost made him gray.

For some time he had heard a sound that had about it an awesome mysteriousness. It came from a partially-abandoned shaft, at his right. He would have thought it was caused by rats, had he not known there were no rats in the mine.

He was familiar with the noises made by what is called the "working" of a mine—the slipping and pinching together of the rocky walls and roof.

The sounds were different.

He lifted himself partially from his recumbent position and stared into the blackness, intently listening.

His whole being thrilled at the sound he caught. It was very like human footsteps. Like, and yet unlike! It had a gliding, sliding motion, that seemed to jar the floor.

No doubt all this was fancy. One sees and hears many things, when excited or

frightened, that are heard at no other time. Beebe's nerves crept with the fear that was on him.

He looked toward the mouth of the mine. Its position and circular shape were revealed by the light that came through it. This was not a bright light. Under other circumstances it would have been accounted very dim. But it was bright, compared with the gloom of the mine.

Into this light a form slipped. Slipped is the word;—for there was an ell-like slipperiness in the motion, and a crafty alertness in the attitude.

Beebe recoiled in terror. He could not withdraw his eyes, though, from that gliding shape.

"Old Silvertip!" he gasped, the words sticking in his throat. "And I said I never believed in ghosts!"

He could not doubt that what he saw looked like Silvertip—was the spirit of Silvertip!

Instead of passing out of the mine, the ghostly form turned toward another gallery, walked quietly onward, and disappeared.

Beebe's nerves were completely unstrung. Not for worlds would he remain longer in the darkness of the mine. With a shriek on his lips, he rushed out into the night, and flew down the slope toward the town.

A voice restrained him.

"What's up?" was the loud question.

"Who goes there?"

This was accompanied by the click of a rifle-lock.

Beebe stopped, panting and with every muscle aquiver.

"Who is it?" he gasped.

"I'm one of the guards of the mine. Who are you?"

Beebe's voice was so altered the man did not recognize him.

It was something to have another human being near, and Beebe felt his strength slowly returning. Still, he disliked to confess how he was frightened, and by what.

"There's somebody in the mine!" he explained, as he came up to the guard. "You will laugh at me, I know; but I saw Old Silvertip in there, as plain as I see you now. It must have been his ghost!—though I've always said I didn't believe in ghosts!"

The man whistled his astonishment, and turned to the comrades who were gathering about him. All knew how Beebe had been hiding in the mine; and some of them thought Beebe's weak intellect had played him a trick.

"Oh, it's so!" Beebe asserted. "I saw him in there! If you'll—"

He was about to say they could not fail to find the object that had so frightened him, if they would only make a search; when he remembered that ghosts are said to have the power of mysteriously vanishing, in spite of rocky barriers. Nor did he desire very much to engage in such a search.

"I believe that I'll go on to town and tell Farnall about it!" and he started as if to continue on down the mountain.

"You'll stay with us!" said the spokesman of the party. "Farnall will be up here, shortly. There's some one sneaking in that mine. It's some enemy who means to do dirt. A ghost! Fol-de-rol!"

When he could not escape, Beebe consented to guide two of the men to the point where the ghost had been beheld.

He led the way, shivering, his eyes staring and every sense alert. Had the ghost been encountered, he would, no doubt, have bolted from the spot.

But no ghost was found. A miner's coat was discovered hanging against the wall, near the place where the ghost had disappeared; and the guard insisted that this was what Beebe saw.

"Believe what you please!" he grumbled, not relishing their tones. "I either saw Old Silvertip, or I saw his ghost!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

FROM LOVE TO PERIL.

IN spite of the excitements and perils to which he was subjected, the painful thoughts and conflicting emotions that distressed him, there was never any great interval of time in which pretty Josie Farnall was beyond the mental horizon of Gid Gale.

He did not forget his passionate de-

clarations, nor the half-given promise that had been so painfully interrupted.

And he watched, as lovers will, for an opportunity to whisper again into her ears the story of his love.

Yet, while he was watching and waiting for this chance, he was not unmindful of his obligation to Old Silvertip; nor once forgetful of the motives that had brought him to Tangled Pine.

He was grateful and pleased, when the "protective" force was withdrawn. By that, he knew the scheme against his life had been abandoned.

If another blow came, it would come from another direction, and in an entirely different manner.

He was acquainted with the occurrences taking place at the Heathen Bell Mine; and more than once Farnall sought his advice as to the best course to pursue.

But with all these thoughts and interests crowding on him, his mind turned constantly toward Josie, his eyes watched for her appearance, and his ear was strained to catch the sound of her footsteps as she moved about the house.

He had not asked Sam Farnall the important and momentous question. A species of cowardice kept him silent on this subject, whenever Farnall came near the place. He could talk glibly enough of matters in Tangled Pine and at the Mine, but was unable to say a word concerning the love he bore Josie?

And Farnall, if he dreamed of anything of the kind, never hinted it.

The much-sought opportunity came that evening.

A piazza looked out toward the mountains. Josie stood on this piazza, while the shadows thickened about her.

It may have been a bit of artful scheming on the part of the girl. Such things are said to be not wholly unknown to the members of the gentler sex.

The Gold-Camp Detective saw her there and advanced to her side.

She greeted him with a smile and a pleasant word; and from this a conversation followed, which Gid Gale led, by degrees, to the subject nearest his heart.

"Ask father!" she said, when he pressed her for a reply. "There he is, now!"

Some one, whom she mistook for her father, was coming up the walk.

Gale obediently left her side and descended the piazza steps, resolved to speak to Sam Farnall on the important subject.

He was much chagrined, when he met Beebe Small instead of Farnall.

Beebe had just come from the mine. He was heated and flushed and still trembling. Seemingly, he was pleased to see any one; even the detective, whom he did not regard as his friend.

He hooked a hand through the detective's arm.

"Glad to see you!" he ejaculated. "Do you believe in ghosts? Seen one, just now, up at the mine! The boys laughed at me; but I know what I seen!"

"You were mistaken, no doubt. I can't say that I believe in ghosts!" Gale returned.

He would have withdrawn from Beebe's company; but something in the young man's manner held him.

"Ghost or not, I saw the man that's just been buried!" Beebe chattered, full of the subject. "I saw Old Silvertip! You won't believe it, I know—"

"You are excited," Gale declared, much interested as well as considerably surprised. "Quiet down and tell me just what you saw. It wasn't Silvertip, of course!"

"But it was!" Beebe protested, withdrawing his hand. "I know when I see a thing. Of course, you'll say that Old Silvertip's dead and buried. I know he is; and what I saw, then, must have been his ghost. It looked just like him!"

He was almost angry. He did not like to have his word doubted, in this manner. It seemed to him a reflection on his veracity, or on the quality of his intellect.

He cast away the arm he had been clasping and strode on up the path and into the house.

Gid Gale followed him. Here was something new to think of—to worry over, perhaps.

The detective looked for the girl, who

had been standing on the piazza. She was gone.

With a feeling of disappointment, he turned about and began to pace thoughtfully up and down the path that encircled the house.

The shadows were even deeper near the house than they were along the walk that led to the gate.

He strode up and down, up and down, reviewing the whirling events that had pressed on him since his arrival at Tangled Pine. That had been so recent, and the occurrences so many!

He saw nothing of the figure that lay sprawled, like a black shadow, out on the grass, a few yards away.

With glittering, snaky eyes, this figure watched him; and, whenever he turned his back and walked from it, it hitched nearer and nearer to the house.

The head was lifted like the head of a snake, and words issued from the lips:

"Egad! I couldn't have wanted anything better! He walks right into my fingers! I was afraid I might have to creep into his room, after he was asleep, and tackle him there. This is better!"

Behind the man, and clutched tightly in his right hand, there trailed a rope. A slip-noose was at one end.

The Gold-Camp Detective came again toward this figure, sprawled on the grass. The head receded, and seemed to be flattened against the turf; the motion of the lips was stilled; and, shrewd and watchful as the detective was, he still remained unaware of the presence of this enemy.

Again Gale walked away, and the figure crept nearer.

At the corner of the house, a shade tree spread its arms across the path.

The muttering individual, with assassin-like instincts, gained the foot of this tree, where he paused a moment; and then climbed, slowly and carefully, to the lowest bough.

Several minutes were consumed in this; and once, when Gale came near, the fellow hung against the side of the tree like a lizard, or a flying squirrel.

However, as soon as the detective's back was turned, the bough was gained; and out along its length the man began to crawl.

All his motions were as quiet and crafty as those of a fox. Not so much as a leaf rustled under him. Haste did not seem one of his attributes. If Gid Gale had chosen to move away from the path, the man would have been foiled in this attempt. But he would have come back in some other manner. His persistence was tenacious in its character.

Gale was thinking of the words of Beebe Small. He was greatly bewildered. Sure that Old Silvertip lay in his grave on the stony hillside, he could not account for what Beebe had seen.

He did not doubt that Beebe had seen something which he had mistaken for the spirit of the old man. That something had been hid in the mine. In Farnall's mine! The thought gave him a sense of uneasiness.

He was inclined to think the form Beebe beheld was that of an enemy who was skulking about with evil intentions.

The thoughts that so engrossed the Gold-Camp Detective rendered him less watchful, no doubt, than he would ordinarily have been.

Still, it must be confessed that the man, who had climbed with such snake-like stealth into the tree, was no ordinary enemy; and Gale might well be pardoned for not becoming aware of his presence.

Whoever sent this man had chosen a most capable tool.

The snaky eyes almost burned, so hot was their light, when Gale came once more toward the tree. The form crouched low on the bough, holding on with a fierce grip. The right hand was thrust outward, clutching the noosed rope.

Nearer and nearer drew the unsuspecting detective.

Then the rope shot out, with almost a hissing sound; the noose settled swiftly over Gale's head; and he was hurled, sprawling, by a quick jerk.

Before he could regain his feet, or really comprehend what had occurred, the man dropped from the tree, landing at his side, with cat-like softness of movement.

But the hand that clutched the detective's throat seemed sinewed with steel, so hard and firm was it.

"You thought your enemies asleep, did you?" was hissed into the detective's ear. "You see you were mistaken!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

BASIL BROWN GETS A FRIGHT.

BASIL BROWN was not in a pleasant frame of mind.

He sat at the writing-desk, in his private room, with ruffled brows and restless demeanor.

Affairs had not gone to suit him. Josie Farnall had scorned his offer of marriage; his scheme against the life of Gid Gale had failed; his plans to obtain possession of the Heather Bell Mine had gone awry; and now Drayton, the attorney, had come out boldly against him in his race for the legislature, and had started the much threatened opposition paper.

The first number of this paper lay on the table; and Brown took it up, and glanced over it by the light of the lamp.

He had already read every word; but he looked at the contents, now, with as much eagerness as if they possessed all the elements of novelty.

Dick Drayton had not been sparing of his innuendoes. He had even gone from hints to open charges; and there was one paragraph, of somewhat mysterious wording, which seemed to charge Basil Brown with the guilt of murder.

"That must refer to Old Silvertip," Brown thought, re-reading the paragraph, carefully. "It can't mean anything else. But pshaw! What proof can they have? The doctor pronounced it heart disease, and there was no investigation to show that it was anything else."

He tried to comfort himself with this reflection; but his pale and agitated face showed how greatly he was disturbed by the covert charge.

It had long been his ambition to occupy a seat in the Legislature of his State. There were two things to be gained by it; his vanity would be gratified, and the chance would no doubt come for making a large sum of money by the sale of his vote. Every principal of honor was lacking in this man.

Over and over he read the paragraphs of this first number of the new paper. He might have been flattered by the amount of attention it gave him, if his fears had not risen above everything else.

After awhile he put down the sheet, tipped back his chair, and sat, ruminating.

A great gulf seemed to yawn before him, from whose blackness and peril he shrunk. The gulf had been excavated there since the coming of Gideon Gale to Tangled Pine. At least, it had been uncovered since the detective made his appearance in the town, and through the detective's influence.

There were more things feared by this man than punishment for the crime mentioned by Gid Gale. In his past there were numberless crimes of the blackest character; any one of which, if clearly proven against him, would place him behind the bars of a prison.

These things made him nervous and uneasy at all times; and especially so when he seemed threatened. He had not a doubt that Gid Gale had come to the gold-camp with the intention of placing him under arrest, if sufficient proof could be secured for the purpose.

He tipped further back in his chair, resting it against the wall, and remained in that position for a long time, musing over remote and recent occurrences and speculating as to the future.

The window toward the mountains was open; and the soft night-wind came through, rustling the paper that so disturbed him. His eyes closed and his head drooped forward on his breast.

Suddenly, he was aroused, being wide awake on the instant. Why this was so he could not have told. In truth, he hardly knew he had been asleep; but he was now conscious of an exceeding wakefulness.

The wind blew stronger and, catching the paper, rolled it to the floor. The draught that came through was heavy. He turned

toward the door, feeling sure it must be ajar.

A deep horror grew in his eyes, his face whitened, and he came nigh falling from his chair.

In the doorway stood the well-known form of Old Silvertip! A form that was ghastly and ghostly. The breeze caught the white hair and beard, and tossed them as if they were real hair.

A gurgling cry welled from the lips of the frightened man at the table. The staring look grew more intense, the pallor on the face deepened, the chair went over with a crash; and Basil Brown sprawled out of it on the floor as if dead.

The ghostly figure in the doorway advanced silently, until it stood above the unconscious form on the floor.

It stooped down and felt in the pockets of the coat. Then, with much haste, it searched through the papers in the drawer, that stood open.

On one paper the fingers closed. It was the mortgage deed that had been given by Sam Farnall to Basil Brown on the Heather Bell Mine.

This the ghost transferred to a pocket of the shabby coat; and then made another search of the drawer. This last search yielded nothing, however.

The ghost of Old Silvertip, in spite of the haste it exhibited, was exceedingly careful and circumspect.

Having made sure that Basil Brown was in an unconscious condition that was likely to last for a number of minutes, it extracted a bunch of keys from Brown's pockets.

With these keys other draws were unlocked and investigated. Two additional papers were the spoil of this search; and these papers, like the first, were transferred to the pockets of the shabby coat.

Such a ragged, earthly-looking coat as that was, too! Surely, no spirit would have worn it—if spirits may be supposed to wear real clothing! And surely this was real clothing!

The ghostly figure forgot nothing. The papers were all replaced just as found. The drawers were carefully locked. And, finally, the bunch of keys was restored to Basil Brown's pocket, with the same care.

Then the mysterious figure vanished through the doorway, leaving nothing to show that it had ever disturbed the room by its presence.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

KANSAS KATE'S STRANGE COUNSEL.

THE eyes of Kansas Kate sparkled with a singular light, as she sat in the little apartment back of the restaurant, and talked with Beebe Small.

She had courted Beebe's society; seeking him out on every occasion; and now she had inveigled him into that rear room, that she might broach a subject very dear to her heart.

This was before Beebe beheld the ghost in the mine;—before the appearance of that spectral form to Basil Brown.

Perhaps this conversation between Beebe and Kansas Kate should have been set down in its proper place; but it may be told now as well as earlier. The words spoken are the things to be borne in mind.

Having flattered Beebe's vanity as much as she dared, Kansas Kate led him, by slow degrees, to speak of his love of Josie Farnall and of his growing hatred of Basil Brown.

As Beebe talked, his eyes blazed, his brow contracted, and his breath came heavily.

The crafty woman regarded him curiously; and seemed to delight in playing on these passions, as skillful performers delight in playing on a many-toned instrument.

"You love this girl?" she questioned. "You say you love her better than you do your own life?"

"I do!" Beebe avowed. "There is no one I love better!"

"Then, why don't you get possession of her?"

She bent forward, looked in his passion-filled eyes, and threw a peculiar intonation into her voice.

"Why don't you get possession of her?"

"That's easier said than done!" Beebe growled.

"Oh, there's some one standing in your way? More than one, perhaps?"

"I'd like to kill them!" he declared, with distorted face.

"Don't do that!" she advised. "Marry the girl, and so get ahead of them. What's the use of killing people and putting your neck into a halter, when it's a great deal nicer to put it in a matrimonial noose?"

He looked at her, not understanding her aim.

"I'm your friend," she said. "You have had plenty of proof of that. You remember how I helped you when you fell down those steps? How I bathed and bandaged your head? Of course you can't help remembering it. The hurt isn't well, yet!"

"It don't bother me," replied Beebe, lifting his hand to the injury. "Yes, you were my friend. I know that."

"And a friend is entitled to give advice!"

"Yes," admitted Beebe, nodding and staring at her.

"Then marry the girl!"

"If you'll tell me how! She won't have me!"

"She's said she won't have Basil Brown. He's a fool, like you are. Because of that, he has dropped out of the fight. He is standing back, and seems willing to let Gid Gale have her. You're not going to do that way? You're not so big a fool as that, Beebe?"

"I'll kill Gid Gale!" he growled, clinching his fist again.

"And get yourself hung for it! Listen to me!"

She stooped forward, placed her lips to his ear, and whispered some sentences.

Beebe started as if electrified.

"It can't be done!" he declared, doubtfully.

"Can't it? Have you the sand to try?"

A hesitating look overspread his countenance.

"Have you got the sand to try it? If I work everything right into your hands, would you be willing to play the leading part?"

A variety of base emotions fought for expression in his scowling face.

She eyed him anxiously, and continued to ply her questions.

Her attitude and manner, but not her words, said:

"Beebe Small, you're a coward! You dare not do the thing I have proposed! You dare not walk in the path that I, a woman, am not afraid to tread! You are no man—just the semblance of one!"

"What do you say?" she demanded, at length, when she had quite exhausted her patience and her arguments.

"I say that I'll do it!" Beebe asserted.

And, as he made the assertion, his heated, swollen face, his feverish eye, and his fiendish expression, stamped him as more a brute than a man.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A STARTLING SITUATION.

THE Gold-Camp Detective, bewildered, astonished, stricken to the earth, struggled vainly to free himself from the noose that choked him and the iron hands that clasped his throat.

The attack had come in a manner so wholly unexpected that it found him quite unprepared; and, though he writhed and twisted and used every art known to him to break the hold of his assailant, it was impossible to do so.

His struggles were not heard by any one within the house; and, when they grew feebler, showing that his strength was waning, the man uttered a low whistle.

This brought two other men out of the grass.

Before they reached the path Gale was securely bound.

It was no difficult task for the three men to lift the detective from the ground and carry him out of the yard. He was in a condition of helplessness and of partial unconsciousness.

"Worked it slick, didn't ye?" one of the men grinned, addressing the hero of the rope. "Where's the rest o' the boys?"

The rest of the boys were found, not far away, in charge of some horses.

Before they were reached, however, Gale came out of the semi-stupor into which he had been choked.

He did not make this known to his captors, but lay limply in their arms, listening carefully to all that was said.

He was confused, and unable to tell just what had occurred. He knew, though, that he was in the power of his enemies. It needed no explanation to assure him of that.

He heard the voice of the Terror from Tarantula, and was further enlightened by it. Some new scheme was being pushed by Basil Brown! He wondered if he was being carried again toward the timber, for the purpose of being hanged.

There were about a dozen men, having with them about a dozen or fifteen horses, grouped together in a hollow, just at the end of one of the streets of the town; and here they seemed to have been waiting the coming of those sent to trap the detective.

The night was one of only partial darkness. When clouds scudded across the sky, veiling the light of the stars, the gloom was intense. At no time, however, was there sufficient light to enable the detective to discern, with any distinctness, the faces and forms of the men about him.

He was dumped to the ground, with very little consideration for his feelings. Then he heard the voice of the Terror again, as the latter approached and bent above him.

The contracted brain of the marshal was filled with brutal joy. He lifted his foot and gave Gale a heavy kick.

It had a most surprising effect. The apparently unconscious form, though bound, rose half erect, and the fingers of the tied hand clutched the Terror by the throat.

"Do that again," Gale hissed, "and I'll kill you!"

Travers recoiled, with an inward shiver.

"What are you going to do with me?" Gale questioned.

There was no longer any need of pretending an unconsciousness that did not exist, and he was anxious to know the character of his fate.

"That's all right!" said Travers, affecting a laugh. "You're pretty lively on your pegs, yit, if you air twisted up in that style! I like to see you so. Can't git no fun punishin' a dead man!"

At this juncture, there was another arrival, to whom all attention was turned.

The Gold-Camp Detective could not determine who it was, because of the darkness. He knew, though, from words spoken, that the new-comer was a captive, even as he was, and in a worse condition.

If Old Silvertip had been alive he would have thought this captive Silvertip. But he knew that Silvertip was dead; in spite of the remarkable story told by Beebe Small.

There was a further delay, after the coming of this second prisoner. Then Gale was mounted to the back of a horse, to which he was tied; and the journey that had evidently been planned was commenced.

The town was quickly left behind, and the little cavalcade headed toward the mountains.

Gale tried to penetrate the gloom about him and ascertain who was his fellow prisoner.

Finally the opportunity came. He did not see the face of the captive; but the latter crowded close up beside him, leaned over, and whispered.

He gasped in perfect astonishment.

The voice that sounded in his ears was that of Josie Farnall.

"You're a prisoner too!" was what she said. "I just now knew of it! Are you tied?"

The detective could scarcely reply. His tongue almost refused to perform its office.

"Tied so that I can hardly move," was his answer. "In addition, I'm strapped to the horse!"

"I'm not fastened to the horse," she informed him, "but my hands are bound. Do you know where we are going? What is to be done with us?"

Scarcely had she uttered these questions, when it became known to her captors that she had crowded her horse forward and was conversing with Gid Gale.

One of them, a broad-shouldered, brawny fellow, who seemed to be somewhat in authority, spurred up at her side and, leaning over, jerked her bridle.

"None of that!" he growled, in anger. "No more courting, between you two! I won't have it! See? You're going on your wedding trip! You're to become my wife, pretty shortly; and I don't allow my future wife to be playing any tricks like that!"

Gid Gale and the girl recoiled in horror and with much trembling.

The words were spoken by Beebe Small.

The poisonous ideas poured into Beebe's ears by Kansas Kate had sprung up and borne fruit.

Gid Gale writhed in impotent rage. How he longed to spring to the ground, drag Beebe out of his saddle, and punish him for his insolence, as he deserved. Nothing could have so gratified the detective, at that moment.

But he could only writhe, and strike with words, instead of blows.

"You're a scoundrel, Beebe Small! You're a coward, too; and, if you'll release me for only five minutes, I'll prove it to the world! There isn't a bit of manhood about you!"

Beebe reached over and seemed about to smite him in the face. But he drew back and contented himself with dragging on the reins of Josie Farnall's horse, and thus forcing her from the detective's side.

Gid Gale wondered how she had been trapped. He had not had opportunity to question her on the subject.

Nothing, however, had been easier than the manner in which she was taken.

She received word that Kansas Kate wanted to speak with her, just for a moment, near the gate; and that, for reasons which would then be made plain, Kansas Kate did not wish to enter the house.

Obedying this false summons, she fell an easy prey.

She had not dreamed, however, that Beebe Small was responsible for the treacherous act. Beebe, who had always been to her as a member of the family! Beebe, who had claimed to love her as he loved himself—who had asked her to marry him!

It was inconceivable to her that this love of Beebe's Small should be the occasion of her present distress. She could not believe love would lead any one to treachery and crime against the individual loved.

Such love was no love at all!

Josie Farnall said as much, as Beebe Small drew on the rein of the horse and forced her along with him. Her words were very bitter—more bitter, if possible, than those spoken by Gid Gale.

"Just the same, it's because I love you!" he avowed. "At any rate, I intend to marry you! That's what you are here in this party for!"

He leaned toward her again, with the very evident intention of kissing her.

Though her hands were tied together, she yet succeeded in lifting them, as he approached her, and dashed the doubled fists full in his face.

He drew back, with a bitter curse; a curse that was heard by Gid Gale, and which acquainted Gale with what had occurred.

If Gale had not realized how unwise it was to further irritate the young bully, he would have commended the act openly and shouted encouragement to Josie. He was much pleased, though, at this show of spirit, on her part.

Not again during the long ride was Josie Farnall permitted to approach him.

His thoughts were on her all the time. Notwithstanding Beebe's words, he could not understand the nature and intent of this long journey. It did not seem possible that he and Josie would be borne away thus together, if there was a plan afoot for the forced marriage of Beebe and the girl.

He could make nothing out of it! He only knew that he was very tired and miserable; that his head and his bones ached; and that he was being borne into the mountains by these enemies.

A ride of three hours brought the party to a wild gorge, where the shadows hung even more gloomily than in the open country.

It was so dark in this gorge that torches were procured.

By the light of these torches, the cavalcade was partially revealed. Beebe's form

was outlined, as also Josie's. And, besides, the Terror from Tarantula was to be seen.

It was quite evident that the marshal was in charge of the party; and it was also quite evident, to a man of the detective's perceptive powers, that this company was nothing more nor less than an outlaw band.

This grew plainer and plainer, as the journey was continued; for, in a short time, a number of cabins was revealed, in a circular bend, at the upper end of the gorge.

Gid Gale was well acquainted with the appearance of an abandoned mining-camp. If he had not been, he might have fancied this group of cabins such a camp. But mining-towns are seldom fitted up for defense.

There was a stockaded wall about the cabins; and each cabin was a little fort in itself, perforated for the use of rifles.

None but outlaws would so construct their houses—for no Indian raids were to be feared, at that time.

What he saw did not surprise Gid Gale as much as the reader may imagine.

He had been convinced that Travers—as well as Basil Brown—was mixed up in the road agent forays that were becoming of such frequent occurrence.

If Travers had not shown so many evidences of cowardice, he would have thought him the masked road-agent encountered on the stage trail.

Gale was pretty well satisfied, and had been all along, that the mob which threatened his life, was only a band of men owing allegiance to Basil Brown and Travers; and he believed, now, that every one of the horsemen surrounding him had been a member of that mob.

Some change had come over the spirit of Basil Brown's dreams. Apparently, he did not now desire to bring about the detective's death by hanging.

Gale pretty shrewdly suspected that Drayton was, in a measure, responsible for this change of front. The compact Gale had entered into with Drayton and Farnall had already produced results. How deep those results were, even Gid Gale did not then know;—and the reader has possibly not even dreamed.

Drayton and Farnall were like moles working beneath the surface.

Farnall, in truth, had been very busy in the detective's behalf.

With the flaring light of the torches revealing everything, and the cabins in plain view, the Terror of Tarantula did not think it advisable to longer conceal the road-agent character of himself and his men. Nor did he try longer to conceal that he was the leader of the party, if he had made any such attempt.

He came back to where Gid Gale was riding, the evil sneer on his face revealed by the torch he bore.

"You're welcome to our home, sich as it is!" peering at Gale with his snaky eyes. "You'll find that we've got quite a town up hyer. Hain't no cooks ner hotel help, but we carry them with us. The grub'll be first rate, an' the mountain air as good as kin be had. Hope you'll like it!"

"We're going to hole you up hyer until your friend Drayton becomes willin' to back down. He's makin' certain charges, an' he's dependin' altogether on you to prove 'em fer him. He'll find, when he calls fer his witness, that his witness won't be forth-comin'. An' then the people will believe that Drayton has only been tellin' a pack o' lies, after all; an', in consequence, Drayton'll find himself worse off than he was at the outset!"

The Terror from Tarantula seemed to take especial pleasure in thus outlining to Gid Gale the reasons that induced Basil Brown to plan and carry out this kidnapping.

"And Josie Farnall?" the detective questioned, hoping the garrulity of the Terror would lead him to further revelations. "Why is she here?"

"A weddin's on the tapis!" thrusting his tongue into his cheek and leering wickedly. "I low you'll be invited. Goin' to be the highest old times up hyer you ever heard of! We'd like to invite our neighbors, but—"

He wheeled his horse and rode away.

"It wouldn't be healthy for him to let his neighbors know where he keeps himself, up

here!" thought Gale, watching the marshal's torch as it flickered away in the distance.

His reflections were broken by the approach of two men, who seized his horse and led it to one of the cabins.

Here the cord was cut that bound him to the horse, and he was lifted to the ground.

He could scarcely have dismounted, otherwise, except by tumbling from the animal. His limbs were so stiff and swollen, from the pressure of the ropes, that he could scarcely move them.

The door of the cabin was flung open and he was assisted to enter.

It was one of the smallest in the robber camp; and consisted of only one room, that was almost bare of furniture. It held a stool, and a rough cot; and that was about all.

Gale could not tell to what point Josie had been conducted; and he questioned one of his guards.

"She'll be treated all right!" the guard assured, noticing the uneasiness in the tones. "It's a straight enough weddin', I kin tell you that, and I don't allow that any bridegroom will let his bride be mistreated."

"Is there to be a wedding, sure enough?" Gale groaned.

"Sure!" the guard declared. "That's straight goods! There's to be a weddin', in this hyer camp in the hills; and Josie Farnall is to be the bride and Beebe Small the bridegroom!"

CHAPTER XXX.

THE BADGER ATTACKS HIS CAGE.

NOTHING but a sublime courage could have sustained Josie Farnall throughout that terrible ride to the outlaw camp.

She did not know, except for the words spoken by Beebe Small, why she was thus trapped and dragged from her home.

She had never thought that Beebe could be so base a creature as his words showed. She had thought Beebe something of an egotistical idiot, possessed of wild ambitions that led him to leap toward heights far beyond his abilities, but she had never dreamed him an unmitigated scoundrel.

Dozens of times he had assured her of his love, and implored her to consent to become his wife. Almost always, on such occasions, he had made himself ridiculous, as when discovered by Gid Gale.

Though she disliked him, she had not entirely hated him. Now, a hate that was absolutely furious, and of which he was the object, filled her bosom.

When the outlaw camp was reached, she was conducted to a cabin, set somewhat apart from the others.

Apparently it was the cabin of the chief, or principal man, of the band. It was better and more comfortably furnished, as well as neater, than any of the others. There were skin rugs on the floor; several chairs, a little table, a sofa lounge and a bed that was fairly inviting.

But it was a most irksome prison, nevertheless.

When the door had been closed behind her and the guard had departed she essayed to examine the place more thoroughly.

A small lamp burned on the table, and by its light she surveyed the room.

She saw there was a door in one end. She surmised, but was not sure, that this door connected with another apartment.

If the light had been better when she was brought into the camp, she would have seen that the cabin she was destined to occupy consisted of several rooms.

She tried to sustain her sinking spirits and to fancy no harm would come to her. She knew Beebe so well; and, because of this knowledge, believed he could hardly be serious in his declarations.

She tried to account for her present position by assuming that the acts of this party were connected in some way with the trouble over the mine.

She could form no consistent theory to uphold this; but she nevertheless clung to it simply because she preferred not to think otherwise.

While she was yet scanning the walls of the room, the door opened and Beebe Small made his appearance.

He closed the door after him, and faced

her, with a mixture of defiance and cowardice.

"You are looking well," he commenced, with a cringing leer. "I never saw you looking better. If you continue to be that handsome, you ought to know that I can't resist you."

"Will you tell me, Beebe Small, why I am here?" she asked, stepping toward him and holding up the lamp so that every line of his countenance was revealed.

He shifted uneasily, and paled under the scrutiny.

"I told you, once," he said, trying to assume a pleasing and jocular manner. "I brought you here, because I intend to marry you. You'd never consent to it, down there in the camp; so I brought you up here—"

"Scoundrel!" she exclaimed. "Do you dare to talk to me that way? Beebe Small, you ought to be as a brother to me!"

"I want to be something better than a brother! And I intend to be, too. I won't argue the matter with you. I just stepped in to see how you were getting along. I was afraid you might think of butting your brains out against the logs!"

He retreated before the blaze of her scornful eyes.

"I want to say to you," in an apologetic tone, "that you will be as safe here, and as comfortable, as if you were at home. You'll get your three meals a day, and you can sleep sixteen hours out of the twenty-four, if you want to. Of course, you'll have to stay in this room and the yard. There's a stockade fence round the yard. Still, if you want to walk out, I'll be glad to go with you any time, or to send some reliable guard."

She turned from him and set the lamp on the table.

He stood for a whole minute, with his hand on the door knob, waiting for a reply; and, when none came, he passed through the doorway and disappeared.

All this while Gideon Gale had not been idle-minded or idle-handed. His thoughts, of course, were largely of Josie.

He had been in his prison but a little time when a pail of water was brought in. His keen eyes observed that the pail was ready to fall to staves and that the upper hoop was loose.

Scarcely had the guard turned his back before Gale was at work on this hoop, trying to remove it.

All his bonds had been removed when he was lifted from the horse and borne into the cabin.

The iron hoop came off, without much difficulty, and was securely hidden away before the guard returned.

At the rear of the cabin there was a high window, across which heavy wooden bars were nailed. These bars were so strong that they could not be removed or shaken by the strongest man, without the use of tools.

This window was one of the first things observed by the detective. He looked at it again, now; and estimated the thickness of the bars and the time that would probably be required to sever them.

"If I had some kind of a pole or club to use for a battering ram!"

He made a hurried search about the room, which yielded nothing of the kind. The only thing was the little bed, whose side railings, had they been heavier, might have answered. They were of light pine, however, and very small.

"They might serve," he thought, "if I could only saw a couple of the bars partly through."

He was not given time for a further survey. He was satisfied, however, that the room would furnish nothing else.

The guard came back; and, sitting on the stool, talked garrulously with the prisoner, for a half hour or more.

Gale encouraged him in this, hoping to obtain further and valuable information.

But he learned very little more than he already knew.

The man did not confess that he was an outlaw or that this was an outlaw band. He claimed they were simply friends of Beebe Small; that Beebe had decided to marry the young lady, whether she was willing or not; and that they had come to his assistance because he so especially desired it.

The detective knew that the man's words

contained an admixture of truth and lies. Just how much was truth and how much was falsehood he could not determine.

The Gold-Camp Detective did not close his eyes in sleep, that night.

As soon as the guard was gone from the room, he took down the iron hoop. He hoped to make of this iron hoop a saw, that should eat through the bars which now fenced him off from liberty.

The prospect did not seem promising, as he carefully examined the belt of semi-rotten iron.

The lamp had been left with him. He had turned it low; and examined the iron, now, by its faint light.

He turned the light still lower, and put the hoop away.

Then he began a search of the room, getting down on his hands and knees and feeling about with extreme care.

A feeling of despondency came to him, when he could find nothing that promised to answer his purpose. There seemed to be not a scrap of iron in the room that he could utilize in the manner he desired. He wanted a bit of iron, or steel, that was sufficiently heavy, by striking with it, to nick one edge of the hoop into the semblance of a saw.

There was the bail of the water bucket, and some more hoops; there were nails in the bedstead; but nothing else of iron or steel that he could discover.

Suddenly a thought occurred to him. There were iron heel-plates on his shoes! They had been there for some time; and he knew they were worn until the edge of one of them, at least, was almost as sharp as a knife.

In a jiffy, he was flat on the floor, and one of his shoes was off.

He passed his hand over the plate on the heel. It was a crescent-shaped bit of iron, an inch and a half long and half an inch wide.

He pulled at it with his fingers, but it was tightly nailed on.

He hadn't a knife or any sort of implement or weapon.

In this dilemma he took up the hoop. By bending it and working it backward and forward he succeeded in breaking it in two; and then began to dig with one of the ends at the heel-plate.

It seemed a hopeless task to which he had set himself. The broken end of the hoop appeared to make no impression. A sense of desperation, however, added to his courage and tenacity of purpose.

He recalled the old proverb of the constant dropping of water that wears away the stone; and then he began to think of himself as a badger, holed up in a cave and striving to gnaw its way out.

"Patience and perseverance will accomplish most anything!" he muttered, gouging and digging away with the broken end of the hoop.

He was pretty sure the guard was not far away. That individual might be at rest on the doorstep, sleeping or waking, for all the detective knew; or he might be carousing with comrades in another part of the camp.

Still, Gid Gale was as cautious in everything he did, as if he knew the guard to be only a few feet distant, wakeful and alert.

A little thrill of pleasure came to him, when, after digging at the leather for five minutes or more, he discovered a little furrow beneath the edge of the iron.

He renewed the work with increased feelings of hopefulness.

But ten minutes went by! This was followed by an hour!

He was compelled, literally, to remove the heel-plate by reducing the leather beneath and around it to a powder; and this was a work of extreme slowness.

The perspiration was rolling from him and his breath was coming more rapidly than common, when the heel-plate gave, under his grasp, and he was able to wrench it away.

So great did he feel this triumph to be that his liberty seemed already a thing accomplished. In fancy he beheld the rude saw finished, the bars severed, and freedom before him.

He replaced his shoe and crept to the door, where he remained for some time, resting and listening. He desired to know if the guard was near.

After a time, he returned to his first position, near the table, almost sure the guard was not stationed at the door.

He made another search of the room, thinking to find a piece of wood that might serve as a hammer.

There was nothing of the kind, except the chair; and he again had recourse to his shoe.

He removed it from his foot, and discovered that its heel would make a very good hammer; and then began the real work of the night.

Using the sharp edge of the heel-plate as a knife, and battering it with the heel of the shoe against one edge of the hoop, he found he could nick the latter in a manner that might answer.

This hoop-saw, when finished, would look little enough like a real saw; but that did not matter, if it did the work desired.

The remainder of the night was consumed by the detective in the manufacture of this saw. It was slow and tedious work. Many times the task was suspended entirely for fear he might be heard.

He intensely longed to be able to complete the saw and sever the bars, and make his escape from the prison, before the coming of daylight.

A thousand unexpected things might occur before the return of another night. The day, that was soon to dawn, might be full of peril to himself and the woman he loved. It might even hold death for one, or both of them.

He grew almost desperate, when he found he could not accomplish his escape that night. The saw was half-finished, when the light of the coming day shone over the mountain top and down into the valley. He picked up the half-completed instrument, and seemed about to attack the window, regardless of consequences.

But he drew back, realizing how foolish it would be. All he could do would be to make some gashes in the bars that would, in all probability, be discovered by the guard, and so reveal his plan.

The light brightened, until the mountain-tops burned a rosy red. The silence of the camp became broken; and he knew that the time of action had passed for the present.

Sitting close to the door, that he might hear the returning footsteps of the guard, he attacked the hoop with renewed energy; hammering and hacking away, as if this was the last work to be performed on earth and the time for its performance limited.

When the sun rose, and the camp was fully astir, the difficult task which Gale had set himself was, in a large measure, accomplished. The rude saw was almost done.

A crack in the floor enabled him to conceal the litter produced by his work. He scraped the iron chips, the dust, and all, into the crack.

What to do with the saw troubled him. The heel-plate he could drop into his pocket; the shoe he could put on his foot; but the saw could not be so readily disposed of.

As a last resort, he hid it in the bed; which he tumbled and stirred-up to give it the appearance of having been occupied during the night.

He trusted that an inspection of the bed would not be made.

"Now, if I was only rid of that water bucket!" he mused, looking at it.

He was painfully aware that the rusty ring about the top of the pail, where the hoop had been removed, showed, in a manner to attract attention.

The removal of the hoop had not impaired the usefulness of the pail. The other hoops held it together.

There was no way, though, in which the pail could be disposed of.

"They'll notice that a hoop is missing, and will make a search for it, I am afraid!" was the uneasy comment.

But the guard when he came, gave the pail no heed, and was unaware that there was any change in its appearance.

"Slept well?" he asked, looking toward the bed.

"Not any too well," Gale replied, yawning and trying to appear sleepy.

Though he had not slept a wink, he was never more wakeful.

Soon after the guard went away, saying he would be back in a few minutes, with something in the shape of a breakfast.

Then Gale began to breathe easier.

He believed he could escape, the coming night.

But alas! what might not a day bring?"

CHAPTER XXXI.

A SCHEMING WOMAN.

"I've good news!"

The speaker was Kansas Kate.

She stood in the doorway of Basil Brown's private apartment, on that second floor, to which the reader has been so often introduced.

It will be remembered that this was not the first time Kansas Kate had stood at that door. As a spy, she had crept to it, and listened with breathless interest to the conversation between Brown and Travers concerning the poison that was to be administered to Gideon Gale.

Yes; and she had been there on other occasions.

But now she came boldly, as one who is expected, and anticipates a welcome.

She seemed, too, to be the bearer of good news.

Brown had responded to her knock and stood facing her.

He retreated into the room and placed for her a chair.

"Good news, you say? Tell me about it."

"The party has reached the camp with the girl! There's nothing now that can stand in the way of your revenge. The wedding can come off at any time. But you must witness it!"

"I don't care to!" he declared. "It is not necessary."

She came further into the room, and took the chair he had placed for her. There was a determination and firmness in her face, which he did not seem to like.

It was plainly apparent that these two were well acquainted. They had been on intimate terms at some time, if they were not on intimate terms now.

It was also very clear that each was aware of the kidnapping.

The reader remembers the interview which Kansas Kate had with Beebe Small, in which she urged him to marriage with Josie Farnall.

Her present visit to Basil Brown was connected with the same object.

There was a deep and crafty scheme in her mind; a scheme so deep and crafty that neither Beebe Small nor Basil Brown fathomed it. Perhaps Beebe could not be expected to fathom anything; but Basil Brown, shrewd as he was, had not the remotest conception of the black idea, that lay deep in her heart like a clotted drop of poisoned blood.

Brown fancied himself a man of firmness—fancied himself a man who could not be easily swerved in any direction. Yet he was being led, or rather pushed, by this woman, along a pathway he did not see, and into perils of which he did not dream.

Kansas Kate had not only fanned the passions of Beebe Small, but she had lit the fires of a base and wretched hate in the bosom of Basil Brown.

It was chiefly through the influence of her artful suggestions that Basil Brown made that foolish movement against the Heather Bell Mine.

He had done that because Kansas Kate had whispered that it would be a splendid way to execute his revenge against the woman who had scorned him.

It will be recalled that Kansas Kate visited Josie Farnall with great frequency, even though these visits were not relished by the one to whom made.

From these visits she carried many stories to Basil Brown; many accounts that had no foundation except in her dark imagination.

By means of these stories, she was turning Brown against Josie Farnall. He had thought he loved the girl;—and now, because of the accounts brought him, he was sure he hated her.

Only a week ago, he would have married her. Now, to carry out a plan of revenge, he was willing to see her married to another—to Beebe Small.

And all these changes were the product of the crafty schemes of Kansas Kate; who was working along lines of her own, to please herself, and to execute her own revenge.

She sunk into the chair Basil Brown offered her, and looked at him keenly.

"You must go!" she asserted. "Your revenge won't be complete without it. Besides, I want you to go!"

"Why?" he questioned, referring to the last statement.

"I have reasons of my own. But I should think you'd want to go, yourself. Your revenge won't be half complete, without it. To have her stand up there and be married to that egotistical idiot will repay you for all your planning;—and more than repay you, if you behold it!"

It was characteristic of the keenness of this artful woman that she made her victims think the plans they carried out were, in every respect, their own plans. They did not see the hand that led them; did not feel the power behind the throne!

"It's to be to-night?" he questioned.

"To-night!" and she laughed with a singular glee. "That is, if you can arrange for the preacher. I've got the license here!"

He started in surprise; then got up from the chair and moved toward her.

"I had to pay for it!" and she smiled. "A good deal more than it ought to have cost me. I had to pay not only for the license; but I had to pay for the unusual manner in which it was issued, and for the silence of the fellow that issued it."

She produced the paper and passed it to him for examination.

"It's all right," he said. "You'll see that it gets to the proper place in time?"

She nodded.

"The next thing is the preacher! Can you arrange for that? It must be a genuine wedding, you know!"

He resumed his chair.

One, studying his face, might have noticed that he did not seem to hate Josie Farnall so much as he hated Sam Farnall. He wanted to strike a heavy blow at Sam Farnall, if it could be done with safety to himself.

This last was a paramount consideration.

"Likely the preacher can be got. But I don't want the girl to see me. I guess I'll not try to be there. I'll be more secure here."

But this did not please Kansas Kate.

"You must go!" she urged. "You can witness it, in disguise, if that will suit you better. You can remain completely in the background, in every particular. Have someone else see about the minister!"

"You must be present at that wedding!"

CHAPTER XXXII.

A NERVOUS DOMINIE.

WITH a nervous start, the Reverend Poindexter Smith lifted his head from his peaceful pillow. There was no need to strain his ears to catch the sounds that assailed them. These came distinctly enough. Loud thumpings and bumpings on the hallway door, with a clanking of spurs and a tread of heavy boots.

It was enough to frighten a man of more determined courage than Poindexter Smith.

The Rev. Poindexter was a somewhat callow youth, fresh from the Eastern college, who had ventured into the wilds of the West without exactly understanding the character of the region.

The good man's piety had never been questioned. And piety, in the West, as in the East, if it is of the right sort, usually commands respect.

Probably there was not a man in the rough mining-camp of Tangled Pine who would have laid a harmful hand on the young dominie; and, it is pretty certain, there were any number who would have fought for him, had they considered it necessary.

Of course the reverend gentleman did not know all this. His admirers had never come to him in a body, or even singly, and assured him of their regards, and their desire to spill their blood in his behalf, whenever it should be needed.

They had contented themselves with mildly cheering the good points in his sermons, and in other ways letting him know they thought well of him.

Notwithstanding all this, the Rev. Poi-

dexter Smith shivered and inwardly groaned when he heard the tramp of those heavy boots, the musical jingling of spurs, and the battering against the hall door. That repeated "rat-tat-tat!" he knew, from its peculiar sound, was made by the butt of a pistol; and of pistols he had a horror.

The summons was so imperious, however, that it could not be ignored.

"I hope it isn't on account of that last sermon!" he moaned, tossing back the bed-clothing and putting his feet out on the cold floor. "Perhaps I did strike a little too hard in that sermon!"

He recalled very distinctly the severest of the sentences of that unlucky discourse, as he now considered it.

It was a sermon directed against the lawless element of the camp.

Like every one else in Tangled Pine, the Rev. Poindexter Smith had not gone unaware of the wickedness that reared itself so audaciously. Daily every commandment seemed to be broken, and, being disposed to fight the sins that were near rather than those prevalent in distant lands, he had excoriated these offenses in a very lively manner.

"I may have borne down a little too hard," he thought, as he put his slippers on his feet and shuffled toward the nearest window. "But, if I tell them that I did it for their own good, surely—"

He hoisted the window and looked down into the street, and there beheld a number of horsemen. His worst fears seemed to be realized. Two of them stood on the porch, and, even as the window was hoisted, the butt of the revolver banged its heavy summons once more against the door.

"What is it, my good friends?" Smith meekly inquired, leaning out of the window.

The man with the revolver stepped in that direction and looked up.

"Sleep like you'd been on a booze for a week!" he exclaimed, in a voice that was half-angry. "You must have a good conscience, parson! Come down; we want to see you!"

"It's very late!" Smith urged. "Won't to-morrow do?"

"Late, nothin'! 'Tain't more'n nine o'clock! Roll out! 'Hain't no sense in goin' to bed that early! You've got to come down hyer, er I'm comin' up there! Jist bound to see ye, fer a fact!"

"To-morrow won't do?" Smith asked again, in a pleading tone.

"No harm intended!" the man asserted, suddenly comprehending that Smith might be frightened at this array of force. "This hyer's a peaceful crowd of gents. A little business on hand, that's all. Likely it'll be a saw-buck in yer pocket! Two of 'em for all I know!"

These words were so reassuring that Smith drew down the window, hurried into his clothes, and descended the stairway.

He was living a lonesome life, in a house big enough for two families.

He unlocked the hall door, and held the lamp above his head, to see who these strangers might be.

He started, and permitted the lamp almost to fall to the floor, when he saw that the man who faced him wore an impenetrable black mask.

He would have retreated and locked the door, if it had not been too late. The fellow pressed through the doorway; and a second masked man crowded at his heels.

"It's all right, parson!" the foremost assured. "We wouldn't harm a hair o' your head, if we was paid fer it. We're jest sky-larkin' a little, that's all!"

"We've come to ask that you go with us to a certain place, out in the mountains, to marry a certain p'tic'lar friend of ours, to a certain p'tic'lar woman that's a-dyin' to become his'n. We've rid a good ways, and we've took some risks; so that we can't afford to go back without you!"

"I'm no horseman," the reverend gentleman pleaded. "Is it very far?"

"A trifle of a few miles, more or less!" evasively. "But, long or short, you must go with us. As I said, we can't go back without you!"

The minister would have refused, if he had dared. He believed, though, and very probably he was right in this belief, that a re-

fusal on his part would result in the use of force by these men.

If they had come a long distance, as asserted, they were not likely to return without him.

"This hyer is a very pressin' invitation," the masked man went on. "A weddin's like a death. It's one of the things that can't be postponed. You wouldn't have a bridegroom a-dissolvin' of hisself in tears, an' a bride a-fittifyin' of herself into hysterics, now, I know! That wouldn't be a tall like a preacher an' a gentleman!"

"If you'll wait till I get my heavy coat," said Smith, "I will be happy to accompany you. But I assure you I am a very poor horseman, gentlemen. A very poor horseman!"

He hastened back into the house; from which he returned, in a few minutes, properly prepared for a long journey in the chilly night air.

As he stepped out on the porch, he looked toward the town, where lights blazed, and realized that it was yet very early. Still, it was quite dark; and, without a lamp, he could not see the masked faces of the horsemen who clustered about him.

One of the best of the horses was brought up for his use, and he was helped to its back. He climbed very gingerly into the saddle; and took hold of the reins, with some trepidation.

Then the horsemen closed in about him, and rode away up the trail that led from the camp toward the mountains.

After a time, they deviated from the regular trail; and the reverend gentleman was no longer certain of the direction in which he rode.

There were no stars to aid him in determining his location and course. He only knew that he was approaching the mountains, for this was made apparent by the increasing roughness of the route.

In addition to this, he knew he was very sore; that every bone and muscle ached;—and the belief grew in his mind that horseback riding was one of the severest forms of exercise ever invented to torture mankind.

Then a gorge opened, lights twinkled, and the camp of the outlaw band was reached.

The horsemen halted in front of the building which the reader has seen occupied by Josie Farnall.

A number of men were in and about it. It was well-lighted, also; better than any other of the cabins.

Room was instantly made for the clergyman and his escort.

But not immediately did he enter the room occupied by Josie. He was hurried into another apartment.

Here, to Smith's astonishment, stood a masked figure, with an open Bible before him on a table. At the side of the Bible, forming a strange contrast, lay a cocked revolver.

"Put your hand on this book, and swear, by the God in whom you believe, that you will never reveal the name of any man or woman you may see here to-night, or anything of what happens here!"

Poindexter Smith paled and his knees smote together.

He can be pardoned for this exhibition of fear. The bravest, under the circumstances, would have exhibited the white feather.

"Is it necessary that I shall do this?" he queried, his voice husky and shaky.

"You must do it! There's no backing out, now!"

The minister had not yet seen the face of a single member of this band. It is probable that, if he had absolutely refused at this point, he would have been sent back to the camp at Tangled Pine without being given an opportunity to obtain further knowledge.

He did not refuse. The masked man lifted the revolver, in a threatening manner, and Poindexter Smith's right hand obediently sought the page of the open book.

Hurriedly the outlaw went over the words already quoted as the required oath, not asking Smith to repeat it.

"You swear to this, do you?" was the fierce and emphatic demand.

The minister gave a trembling assent.

"Very well, then! You are a preacher. A preacher, of all men, will hold such an oath sacred!"

The outlaws were not aware that the manner in which they were treating Poindexter

Smith constituted one of the highest testimonials to the uprightness of his character and the truth of the religion he preached.

Having thus made sure that the minister would never reveal the name of any one there that night, the outlaw conducted him into the room occupied by the would-be bridegroom, Beebe Small.

Beebe was arrayed as gorgeously as the circumstances would permit. Broad and brilliant plaids and a flaring necktie were the most conspicuous articles of his dress.

Poindexter Smith stared, when he saw him; and stared even harder when Beebe was introduced as the man who was to be married.

He was acquainted with Beebe, after a fashion.

"Rather a novel wedding, isn't it?" Smith gasped. "I haven't been informed, yet, who the bride is to be! Some wild flower you've found away out here in this wilderness?"

"You know her," said Beebe with a grin. "She's Sam Farnall's daughter!"

"Your adopted sister!" the minister gasped.

"Well, yes! She's been so considered. But she's really no more a relative of mine than are you!"

Smith was so bewildered he was almost incapable of asking further questions.

It was dawning on him that there was something very crooked about the whole performance; and that he was being forced into a thing that would set heavily on his conscience.

He began to ask himself why the wedding was to be at that point, so remote from Tangled Pine, instead of at the bride's home?

This was quite on a par with that other mysterious business: the masked faces of the men who had summoned him, and the oath he was compelled to take.

"I can have a few words with the bride, I presume?" he questioned.

"After the ceremony!" said Beebe, with considerable curttness. "She absolutely refuses to see or speak to any one, now."

The uneasy feeling grew in the minister's breast.

He was not given time for further questions, but was conducted into another room; and there saw grouped a number of the outlaws.

Into this room, a woman was half dragged and half-supported.

She was not in a fainting condition—she was not weeping and wailing; she was striving to resist the force that was drawing her into the room.

Beebe Small stepped toward her; and she lifted her head and eyed him with burning glance.

Then her gaze fell on the minister.

"You are not a party to this?" she cried, with bitter scorn.

Poindexter Smith found himself thus brought face to face with a most momentous problem.

She read the thought in his face.

"You will not go on with this crime, when you understand that I am being forced to a marriage with that man?" she pleaded.

The minister looked at Beebe Small, and at the man who had conducted him into the room.

He was shaking with the conflict that raged in his breast.

"I presume the young lady speaks truly?" he asked, striving to appear calm. "Unless there is full consent on the part of each, I cannot proceed with the ceremony! It is against the laws of my church, and the laws of the land!"

Though his voice trembled, there was in it a heroic ring. There was, after all, good fiber in Poindexter Smith. He belonged to that class of men, who, though they may be timid and inoffensive under all ordinary circumstances, will yet walk to the stake with a firm tread rather than surrender what they believe to be the truth.

Having resolved not to go on with this iniquitous business, into which he had been drawn, the young clergyman would have suffered the loss of his right hand rather than submit to the demands of these men.

A chorus of growling oaths greeted his declaration, and more than one finger dropped to the trigger of a revolver. The cir-

cle of coarse faces was scowling and ill-favored.

Josie Farnall tore herself from the arms of those who held her, and placed herself at the minister's side.

"Oh, if you could only take me from this place!" she quivered.

Smith looked about, and the martyr's spirit swelled within him.

"You can kill me, gentlemen, if you wish; but I will not see a hair of this young lady's head injured, and I will not proceed with this mockery of marriage!"

He more than half-expected that a ball from one of those revolvers would silence him, as he thus uplifted his voice.

His blue eyes gleamed, his lips remained parted, and hectic spots burned in his cheeks.

"You're an infernal fool!" came in the voice of the man who conducted him into the room.

"Foolish or wise, I will not knowingly commit such a crime!"

There was a minute's hesitation, in which the outlaws seemed to be sizing up the minister and asking themselves what they should do.

They saw how stubborn he would prove to be should they attempt coercion.

"Git out o' this house, then; an' make tracks for Tangled Pine, as fast as you can!" was the excited adjuration. "Git! Or by all the gods, I'll shoot you where you stand!"

Poindexter Smith attempted to place a protecting arm around the girl; but he was lifted bodily from the floor by a dozen strong hands.

Kicking and struggling, he was borne to the door, and from thence hurled sprawling out on the stones.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE DETECTIVE IN A DESPERATE MOOD.

"BLAMED if I know where I could have dropped the hoop off'n that bucket!" declared the guard who had been set over Gid Gale, along in the afternoon.

He looked at the bucket, dubiously; wondering how the hoop could have dropped off without his knowledge.

"It was loose and rusty," Gale observed, as if he had no especial interest in the question. "I suppose it slipped down while you were carrying water. Probably you'll find it, if you will search along the trail. But the bucket seems to be doing very well without it!"

Not once did the guard dream that Gid Gale had removed the hoop.

The detective's prison was only visited by the guard at intervals. Whenever he was absent any length of time, Gale employed that time in further perfecting his saw.

It required great care to work thus during the daylight hours; and, on two occasions, Gale was nearly caught.

But the day passed, and the night came.

And such a long, dreary day as it was to Gid Gale, tortured by uncertainty concerning his own fate and the fate of Josie Farnall!

The guard gave him little enough information, beyond that he already possessed.

As soon as darkness came, Gale produced his saw, mounted on the chair, and attacked the heavy wooden bars of the high window.

He knew that three bars would have to be sawn in two before he could hope to escape.

In this work two toilsome and tedious hours were consumed. With a hand-saw of any degree of sharpness ten minutes would have been all the time necessary.

But the bars were severed, at last; and then Gale pulled the bed to pieces, that he might use one of the rails as a battering ram.

Fortunately for his purpose there was much excitement in the camp at the time.

Gale knew that something important had occurred, and dimly guessed its character.

This made him wilder and more determined to escape. He was resolved that Josie Farnall should never be married to Beebe Small, if he could do aught to prevent it. He knew that, to Josie, Beebe's touch would be as pollution.

Hearing the sounds and the tread of horses' feet, he wondered if the minister had been

brought from Tangled Pine, of whom the guard had spoken.

"I'll soon see!" he muttered, ramming the rail heavily against the lower bar, and half-careless of the fact that he was making a good deal of noise.

Again the rail was driven against the bar; and then again and again; until the severed bar flew from its place.

The one above it was served in the same manner; and then the third was attacked.

Less than fifteen minutes was needed to drive the bars from their position and open a way to freedom.

The Gold-Camp Detective braced the rail against the wall; and climbed slowly, and with much difficulty through the window. It was a close squeeze; but he crowded his body through and dropped lightly to the ground outside.

He picked up a piece of one of the severed bars for a weapon; and, without giving a backward glance at his prison, stole toward the cabins where the outlaws seemed to be congregated.

As he drew near, reckless of the risk he ran, the door of one of the buildings was pulled open and the form of a man came sprawling out into the night.

"Git!" was the command that followed the sprawling figure; and this command was emphasized by a shot from a revolver.

The bullet was aimed above the head of the minister, and was intended only to scare him into a panic. It came uncomfortably near the head of Gid Gale, who threw himself on his face in time to escape it.

Gale saw the minister leap up and scud down the gorge; and then a crowd of men poured out of the cabin, forcing the detective to beat a retreat.

From the words of these men, and their excited exclamations, he got a pretty fair idea of what had just occurred.

His admiration for Poindexter Smith rose several degrees.

Then he saw a female form led from the room from which the men had issued.

He closely observed her; and, when he knew that she had been placed in the adjoining room as a prisoner, he slowly circled the building and endeavored to approach that room from the opposite side.

"I will rescue her and restore her to her father, or die in the effort!" he gritted, as he stepped slowly on.

He was walking more rapidly than he knew; and he was suddenly caught under the chin by a heavy line and thrown backward.

When he picked himself up, he found he had run into a clothes line. On this line a lot of clothing was stretched. There were shirts, coats and trousers, handkerchiefs, and the like. Some of them were muddy and damp, and had evidently been hung up there to dry.

An idea came to Gid Gale as he felt along the line and made these discoveries.

A horse had whinnied from the corral, lower down the gorge.

A horse would be needed to convey Josie to her home, and her escape from this guarded camp could be more readily effected if she were garbed as a man.

The detective pulled off a goodly quantity of the clothing, so that there might be plenty of it to select from, and then he went on toward the cabin.

Discovering that there were outlaws standing near, engaged in talk, he put down the bundle of clothing at a point where he could readily find it, and crept toward the horse-corral.

He felt that the night was before him, and that he need not hurry.

He knew that Poindexter Smith had refused to perform the wedding ceremony, and that another preacher must be sought. This would consume some time.

His greatest fear was that his escape from prison would be discovered, and the camp more closely guarded in consequence.

From his talks with the guard he knew that sentinels were posted at every approach, and were kept always on duty while the camp was occupied.

As he moved toward the corral, he endeavored to outline, in its minutest details, his proposed plan of action.

He would saddle and bridle two horses—if he could find the accouterments—and tie

them out somewhere. Then he would open communication with Josie Farnall, pass her the clothing, and arrange the details of her escape.

He had his saw with him, though he hoped he could force a door, and would not be compelled to use it.

The excitement produced by the unexpected defiance of the preacher greatly aided him in his efforts.

There was no one near the horse corral, so far as he could ascertain.

He crawled through the wire fence, after he had located the gate.

Near the fence he found saddles and bridles.

But, when he searched the corral, he could discover only one horse. The others had probably been taken further into the hills and placed on better pasture.

This was a bitter disappointment. However, Josie could ride the one horse that the corral held, and he could walk.

He saddled and bridled it and led it to the gate.

Only a bit of wire held the gate in place, so that he had no trouble in opening it and leading out the horse.

Beneath a tree, a short distance away, he tied it by the bridle, and then turned back toward the cabins.

Lights still burned in them, and a few men were visible.

A number of the outlaws had followed Poindexter Smith down the gorge, probably to hurry him on toward Tangled Pine.

Whether or not any of them had gone for another minister, the detective did not know.

Having regained the point where the bundle of clothing was left, he crouched on the grass, awaiting the turn of events.

The men moved away, finally, and Gale approached a window of the room occupied by Josie.

This window looked out on the mountains. It was dark, and he feared it was barred.

He drew near the wall of the room just beside Josie's room, intending to creep along it.

He was arrested by the sound of a grumbling voice.

The words of the occupant of this room quickly told him that the room held a prisoner, and he recalled a statement, made that day to him by his guard, that a prisoner, whom it was thought dangerous to let live, was held by the band and would probably be shot.

Scratching sounds came from the room, in addition to lowly muttered words; and, also, grating noises, as if the man were trying to use, or trying to fashion, a file.

"Poor fellow!" Gale muttered. "I wish I could aid him. I'd try it, if circumstances were different. But my first duty is to Josie."

He crawled on, and continued to hear the low tones of the prisoner, even when he had reached the room that held Josie, and was endeavoring to scale the wall and reach the window.

It did not occur to him, though, that this prisoner would be able to hear whatever words he might whisper to Josie!

The Gold-Camp Detective placed his lips to the window and whispered the name that was dearer to him than any other earthly name.

Almost immediately there was a reply.

Josie came close up to the window. She was quivering with excitement. She could not believe that the voice she had heard was Gid Gale's. The thing seemed so impossible.

"Who spoke?" she asked, in a low tone, striving to repress her excitement.

"I. Gideon Gale. Is that you, Josie?"

There were bars across this window, as across the window of his prison. They were not so strong, however, but that he could pry and wrench them away from the outside.

In addition to the bars there was an ordinary window-sash and panes.

This sash Josie hoisted; and in hurried whispers he told her the character of his plans and what he meant to do.

Men were coming and going not more than a dozen yards from the window, and more than once he was almost sure he was discovered.

Josie comprehended and assented to his

scheme; and then he pushed the clothing through the bars and into the room.

"The camp is so guarded that I must ask you to select out of these and be ready to go with me, in men's clothing. It is the safest way."

She took the bundle; and, when a few further words were whispered, he retreated.

And it was well that he descended from the window at that moment. One of the outlaws came so close to the building that Gale must have been discovered at the window, had he remained.

The detective crouched near the building, not daring to beat a further retreat; and the man, as he walked on, stumbled against him and fell headlong.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

A DARING ESCAPE.

GALE leaped to his feet, and skurried away to a safe distance; before the man could scramble up.

The outlaw knew, however, that something was wrong; that he had stumbled over one who was not an outlaw; or friendly to the band.

His loud cries of excitement rung out, giving warning to the camp, and especially to the sentinels.

Answering cries came; and the entire camp was immediately on the *qui vive*.

The detective greatly regretted the untoward circumstance. His own liberty was imperiled; and he was stopped from doing anything, for a time, for the rescue of Josie Farnall.

He crawled quietly from the dangerous vicinity; and lay flat down on the slope of the hill, where he could see everything that took place.

After a time, he crawled further along, drawing nearer the horse he had removed from the corral and tethered.

He was afraid this horse would be discovered; and, if he had known where to take it, he would have led it further from the cabins.

What he had been able to see from his prison during the day, had revealed a passage through the hills that formed one side of the gorge—this passage opening out into a timbered region.

But the passage was closely guarded.

After he had shifted his position, a cry came from the neighborhood of the cabin he had occupied as a prison.

His escape was discovered; and the excitement of the outlaws grew, in consequence.

"They'll rake the camp pretty closely, now!" he muttered, feeling uncomfortable over the discovery.

The peril to himself did not trouble him so much as did the fact that he would now meet increased difficulties in his attempt to rescue Josie.

If the outlaws still believed him to be in the gorge, they would maintain so vigilant a watch that he would hardly be able to move.

He beheld the flickering of torches, and saw men moving from point to point, and knew they were searching for him.

The vicinity of the corral was visited by them, and they came within less than a score of yards of where the detective lay. But they did not discover that the horse was absent from the corral; nor did they see the figure crouching in the black shadows.

Gale heard them talking to each other; heard the challenges of the sentinels, whenever any one approached; though he could not clearly understand any of the words spoken.

He wondered much if the Rev. Poindexter Smith got out of the valley, and where Smith was; and he wondered, likewise, if Josie's room was visited and inspected.

He could only conjecture; and wait, with an impatience that was feverish and torturing.

The slow hours wore by. Midnight came and went; and still the outlaws moved restlessly up and down the gorge, rendering it impossible for Gid Gale to make any decided movement.

The dial of the stars told him that morning was approaching; but the camp did not quiet down until daylight was near at hand.

Finally the last strident disappeared, silence

reigned, and the moment for action seemed to have come.

Gale returned to the vicinity of Josie's cabin; and, though he realized how important was every moment, he did not permit his haste to make him incautious. He moved slowly and deliberately; and, finally, was able to crawl up to the window, still assured he was not seen.

"Josie!" he called. "Are you ready?"

He was armed with a stout bit of timber, which he thrust between the bars for the purpose of prying them loose.

No reply came in words to his question; but there was a reassuring tap on the window-pane, and he dimly saw Josie's form. She had attired herself in the clothing brought her.

"I'll have these off in a minute!" he encouraged, wrenching and twisting at the lever.

He did not want to use his hoop saw. Time was too precious.

One of the bars came away; and then another.

"I think you can squeeze through here now! Hoist the window and hurry."

The window went up; and he clasped the hand that was extended. It was so cold, and felt so little like Josie's hand he was sure she was ill.

He half lifted her through the window, and then leaped with her to the ground.

"The horse is just over there," he said. "Hurry!"

She walked rapidly along at his side, but with a stealth and lightness that was surprising. Neither spoke a word. The danger was too great.

The horse was found where he had tied it, and he quickly assisted Josie to its back.

"I must bind your hands to fool the guard, should we be seen," he announced, drawing out a piece of the clothes-line, which he had prepared and brought for the purpose. "If we are questioned, I'll claim you're a prisoner, who is being removed from the camp."

His mind was on the prisoner he had heard in the cabin. He whispered the words as he applied the clothesline and tied her hands, lightly, behind her back.

The ragged coat hung down in a manner very satisfactory as a disguise.

"There; that will do!" he declared.

He longed to draw her to him and press a kiss on her lips; but something in her manner together with her silence kept him from it.

Taking the bridle-rein in his hand he started toward the path that opened into the wooded country.

He fancied this path would be easier to penetrate than the one that led toward Tangled Pine.

He hoped to escape the scrutiny of the guard; but in this was unsuccessful; a challenge rung out, sharp and vibrant.

"Who goes there?"

"Travers!" he replied, doing his best to imitate the voice of the marshal. "I'm taking the prisoner out of the camp. It's been thought best!"

The man was not entirely satisfied. The voice did not sound exactly like that of the Terror from Tarantula; and this thing of removing the prisoner, at that hour and in that manner, was something strange.

He drew closer, holding his rifle in readiness. He saw the form on horseback, and the man who claimed to be Travers.

Gale walked straight on; thus bringing him close to the suspicious guard.

Then he dropped the bridle-rein, and leaped, like a tiger, at the man's throat.

A short and desperate struggle ensued. A heavy blow from the fist of the detective rendered the guard momentarily insensible; and, before he could recover, Gale had seized on his gun, on his revolver and belt, and was again leading the horse toward the timber country; feeling safer, now that he was armed.

He was not able to pass over a dozen yards, however, before the cries of the man rung out, carrying the alarm to the entire camp; and, almost immediately, there came the sounds of excited voices and noises, indicating preparations for fighting and pursuit.

The hubbub increased, every second; and Gale, pressing on with desperate energy, saw that the day was dawning. The light

of early morning was kindling in the sky; the peaks were catching the rosy glinting of the sun. Soon day would be at hand; and his perils would be increased thereby, tenfold!

CHAPTER XXXV.

A BEWILDERING DISCOVERY.

THE cries of the sentinel, who had been overthrown by Gid Gale, drew the outlaws quickly to that point.

If Gale had had another horse, he would have soon left them behind; but, compelled as he was to lead Josie's animal by the bridle, and to pick out a path, he could make no satisfactory progress.

He had proceeded but a short distance, when a rattling fire rung out and a shower of bullets cut through the leaves around him.

However, he and Josie were untouched; and he held on his way.

He had passed through the ravine, and was now in the timber belt.

The shadows were so heavy, here, he could barely see his way. The gloom encouraged him. He turned sharply to the right, hoping to evade the pursuing outlaws and yet make his escape.

Behind him, there was a crashing of bounding horses; and the cries of excited men, who had quickly procured horses from some place. Then the pursuers seemed all about him, racing recklessly onward, and he wondered that they did not run over him, or discover him.

A kind fate seemed to protect him.

The obedient animal followed readily, and he kept on toward the right; and came, speedily, into a more open country, where the increasing light had a chance to penetrate.

As he did so, a rifle shot came from in front.

He knew he had been fired on; and he saw a form move in the bushes, only a few feet away.

Another shot flamed from that concealed rifle; and he replied to it, instantly; and was sure his bullet took effect.

Fearing Josie had been hit, he called softly to her. A reply came, but so faintly that it did not entirely reassure him; and, with a terrible anxiety at his heart, he drew the horse still further into the light.

As he did so, he almost stumbled over the prostrate form of the outlaw whom he had reached with his bullet.

That outlaw lifted himself on his elbow, stared into Gid Gale's face, and screamed out, in bitter anger and anguish.

The detective was so astonished one might have knocked him down with a feather.

The fallen outlaw was Kansas Kate!

"Who is that? That is not Josie?" lifting herself still further, and staring at the mounted figure.

Gid Gale turned about and a cry came from his lips.

Josie had fallen forward on the horse.

Looking back, but a moment before, he had seen her sitting erect in the saddle.

She reeled, now, and seemed about to pitch to the ground.

Gale rushed to her side, crying out his inquiries; and was in time to catch the falling form and lower it to the ground.

Then a cry, that was wild and despairing, came from his lips.

This was not Josie. The one he had rescued from the prison cabin, and whom he had been trying to pilot to safety, was a man; and that man was now dead!

The discovery was of so stunning a character that the Gold Camp Detective fairly reeled. He could make nothing of it. He could not dream how the change had been effected. Where was Josie Farnall, and how came this man in her place?

Kansas Kate's bullet had done its deadly work.

No explanation, however, could come, at that moment, from Kansas Kate. Gale looked at her; and saw that she had fallen back, unconscious.

He knew she was dangerously wounded; perhaps fatally; but he gave her scarcely a thought.

He could still hear the outlaws riding, through the timber; hear their cries and calls.

to each other. There had been more or less shooting, and the reports of Kansas Kate's rifle and his own did not draw the outlaws toward him.

He had suddenly lost all fear of discovery. He was almost incapable of thought or action.

A terrible blunder had been committed! But how and when?

"My God! How did this happen? Where is Josie?" he wailed, sinking on his knees at the side of the dead man, as if he would wring an answer from that inanimate clay.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

KANSAS KATE, THE ROAD-AGENT.

A RUSTLING told him that Kansas Kate had regained consciousness and was striving to rise to a sitting posture.

He turned on her, in fierce questioning.

"Tell me what this means!" he demanded, almost crazed by his grief and uncertainty. "Who is this man?"

Kansas Kate dragged herself half-erect, stared at the face of the dead man, and sunk back to the ground.

She was garbed, now, as on that previous occasion, when she had come to the rescue of Josie Farnall from the perils of the runaway stage. But her face was not disguised. The features were those so often seen at the restaurant in Tangled Pine, without any attempt at altering the hue of the skin.

"I thought it was Josie!" she moaned, in a spasm of disappointment and anger. "I thought it was Josie Farnall; and I meant to kill her."

Her feelings toward the girl had undergone, apparently, a complete transformation.

Yet Kansas Kate had not been moved by blind impulse, altogether.

"I meant to kill her!" she fiercely vociferated, striving to stanch, with her handkerchief, the blood that flowed from a wound in her side. "When I thought she was going to get away, and that everything I have schemed for was to fail, I wanted to kill her! And she has escaped me!"

Distracted as he was, Gid Gale could but stare at the woman in amazement.

"You are crazy!" he exclaimed. "What are you talking about?"

A hysterical laugh broke from her lips.

"You think me crazy, but you don't know me. Tell me, Gid Gale, am I going to die?"

The question was vehement and imperious. Gale stooped down and endeavored to make an examination of the wound. There was a ragged shot hole in her side. He could not tell how serious it was; but what he had seen of such wounds made him think it a very dangerous one, and, in all probability, a fatal one.

He looked into her face and fancied he could see the pallor of death gathering there.

"I can't lie to you, when you ask me so pointedly," he said. "I believe you have a mortal wound, Kansas Kate. I am sorry that my hand fired the bullet."

"I won't die!" she asserted. "I must not die, now! Stop the blood, will you? I must have another week of life, at least. There! take this handkerchief! Can't you knot it, so that it will stop the bleeding?"

The detective knelt at her side and tried to do as he was bidden. But the wound was deep and the task not easy. However, he covered the wound with the handkerchief, and secured the bandage so that it would remain in place.

"Now, tell me what you meant by that?" he asked, standing above her. "Why did you want to kill Josie? Who is that man?"

"As for that man, he is the prisoner that has been held in the cabins, for the last day or two. Travers intended to have him shot to-day, anyway."

This poured a little light on the subject; but Gid Gale groped, nevertheless, in much darkness.

"I wanted to kill the girl, because I thought she had escaped and all my scheming had failed. You think you know me, Gid Gale; but you don't!"

"You didn't know I belonged to this band of outlaws! There are some other things that you don't know, that would surprise you as much!"

"It was I that planned to force this marriage between Beebe Small and the girl;—It was I that wanted them to live together as husband and wife! If I could have accomplished that, it would have been the beginning of my revenge. Just the beginning, you understand."

Her eyes burned with the fire of temporary insanity.

"You're feverish and out of your head," Gale asserted. "You should not talk that way. I really don't know what you mean by it, either! I don't get the drift of what you say!"

"I'm not insane!" she flared. "You think this wound is making me crazy?"

She placed a hand against her side, grasped a small bush with the other hand, and drew herself to a standing position.

Since the flow of blood had been partially stopped, she was regaining strength and courage.

"I'm not crazy; and I don't intend to die! I'll not die, till my revenge is complete!"

The horse, that had been standing obediently near all the while, lifted his head, stared into the bushes, and uttered a low whinny.

There was a sound, as if a horseman was coming in that direction.

The searching outlaws had been heard frequently, as they rode hither and thither.

The Gold-Camp Detective saw he dared not remain there longer.

"You will be safe with them," he said, speaking to Kansas Kate. "But I've got to slide. You can tell them what you please about that poor fellow!"

He indicated the dead man, lying, with bound hands, on the ground.

The crashing came nearer, and the sound of voices was heard.

The light of day was increasing.

"Good-by!" said Gale, climbing into the saddle. "Have that wound attended to, or you're a dead woman! And, as for those revenges, you'd better try to forget them!"

He could not say more; but spurred the horse from the place, riding as softly as possible.

He succeeded in evading the outlaws, though he momentarily expected to hear them plunging after him, directed by Kansas Kate.

But, if encountered by Kansas Kate, she did not send them in pursuit of the man, who had first shot her and then assisted her in binding up the wound.

The detective could but believe that Josie Farnall was still a prisoner in the cabin; and, for that reason, he determined to remain in the vicinity until the coming of another night.

However, he was compelled to ride to a considerable distance from the outlaw camp.

There he concealed the horse; and then hovered about throughout the day; watching, as well as he could, for some indications of what was occurring in the gorge.

It was a day of great suspense and mental agony, and it seemed an age in passing.

Water was to be had in the mountain streams; but no food was obtained, and he suffered from hunger.

But the dreary day ended at last; and he again approached the outlaw camp, leading his horse.

He was surprised to find the gorge silent and apparently deserted.

He tied the horse and crept forward.

No light gleamed, and no sentinel challenged.

He circled the camp and then crept to the cabins. Not one of them was occupied.

The camp was abandoned!

This was a blow fully as crushing as any that had yet been delivered.

He knew not what course to pursue. Indeed there seemed but one thing he could do.

He mounted the horse and rode furiously toward Tangled Pine!

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A HEROIC GIRL.

JOSIE FARNALL was in a state bordering on despair, when hope was brought to her by Gid Gale.

She had escaped that hated marriage with Beebe Small, but she was still a prisoner,

and knew not what an hour might bring forth. She was quite certain that the desperate scheme against her happiness would not be abandoned.

It did not lessen her distress to know that the man she loved, and hoped some day to marry, was a prisoner, also, in the outlaw camp. She was forced to believe, by her knowledge of the character of road agents, that Gale's life was in hourly peril.

The reader can appreciate, therefore, how intense was her joy, when the detective crawled up to the window of her room, and whispered his plans of escape for both.

She drew the bundle of clothing through the window, with an eagerness that surprised her. Not that anything could make her willing to appear in male attire; but that she was ready, then, to do anything to aid in the escape that had been planned.

The hope brought to her by Gale's words almost vanished, when he was forced to withdraw, and she heard the outcries of the outlaws as they searched throughout the gorge.

She did not know but that her room would be visited by some member of the band, and the presence of the bundle of clothing greatly unnerved her.

She thrust it under the cot, where it lay undisturbed for a long time.

She was aware that a prisoner occupied the room adjoining hers. She did not know, though, who this prisoner was, or anything of his character.

She heard him moving about and making various queer sounds during the time of the outer commotions, and she wondered if he were not trying to force the bars of his prison and break away.

She commiserated him, and trusted if that were his purpose he might succeed.

The sounds of the search for Gid Gale died away after a time, though she was aware that the outlaws were alert.

All thought of sleep evaded her. From the window she could see a portion of the camp, and she watched the lights that flickered now and then, and listened intently for the return of her would-be rescuer.

One by one the lights disappeared, the voices of the outlaws became stilled, until finally the silence of the midnight hours reigned.

And still Gid Gale did not return.

She wondered if he had been retaken. She could not recall any exultant shout, such as would probably have been sent up in that event.

The noise from the other room continued to reach her. There seemed to be a filing and scraping, with light rubbing, and fumbings at the doors and windows.

She could not conjecture what it all meant, unless the prisoner was working to make his escape.

Mumbling words came likewise from this prisoner, at intervals, though she could not make out what was said.

Midnight passed, and the morning hours drew on.

Then she was startled, and greatly alarmed, by the opening of the door which connected her room with that occupied by the prisoner.

The door was softly opened; as if a key had been fitted into the lock, or the lock itself removed.

This last was what had really been done.

The prisoner came quietly into the room, and stood before her. He held a block of wood in a threatening attitude.

"Not a word!" he commanded.

His blazing eyes told her that he would not hesitate to strike her to the floor if she lifted her voice in an alarm.

She was so agitated she could not reply. She would have fled from him had it been possible.

"That bundle of clothing!" he demanded. "Oh, yes; I recollect! I heard you shove it under the bed."

Her terror increased.

It was very evident that the man had overheard the conversation between herself and Gid Gale, and had become possessed of Gale's plan.

He thrust his hand under the cot and drew out the bundle.

A piece of clothes-line was around it, which he hastily removed.

"Now, hold out your hands!"

His words were fierce and threatening. A low scream came from her lips, and she drew back.

"What do you mean to do?" she faltered. "That's all right. I'm not going to hurt you! That is, I won't hurt you if you mind me! Hold out your hands!"

He lifted the block of wood and moved toward her.

She retreated slowly toward the window. If it had been open, she would have hurled herself through it to the ground.

"I will not let you tie me that way!" she asserted. "Hel—"

The cry was cut short by the man, who leaped on her with the fury of a fiend and bore her to the floor.

"Cuss ye!" he grated. "I've a notion to kill ye, fer that! You'd bring them devils down on me, would ye? Nobody's got any right to think of gittin' out of this place but you! That's yer idee, is it?"

His sinewy fingers wound about her white throat and slowly choked her into insensibility.

When he saw she was unconscious, he proceeded to bind her with the rope; after which he tore the lining out of a coat and formed it into a gag.

"That'll keep ye, from talkin' in yer sleep!" he muttered. "You won't be in sich a hurry to howl out, either, as you was awhile ago!"

He got up and stared about the room. The lamp, which burnt low on the table, he turned still lower.

"If that chap would jist come back, now, and pry off them bars, as he said he would!" he mused, looking toward the window. "Must be nigh-about mornin'! I've been afraid, all the time, he'd get back too soon—before I was ready fer him; now, he can't come in too big a hurry to suit me!"

Every detail of Gid Gale's plan was fresh in the mind of this desperate man. He was resolved, now that he had got that far, that nothing should stand between him and his liberty. He would have killed both Gale and the girl, had these crimes been necessary to his purpose.

Once he had been a member of the band, which was now resolved on his death. He had proved untrue to the oaths taken; and, having been captured, he was condemned to be shot.

"That won't do!" he said, looking down at the girl.

She moved, and he knew she was returning to consciousness.

"'Twon't do to have her laying there in plain sight, when the chap comes back to the winder. I'll have to stow her away, somewhere. Wonder who he is, anyway. Her lovyer, of course! She called him 'dear Gid!' What won't a man do fer a woman!"

"Well, I'm powerful glad they've played their game so that it's likely to benefit me!"

He grasped the girl by the shoulders and drew her to the cot; and then gave her a push that slipped her under it.

"Jist made to fit!" he chuckled. "Snug as a bug in a rug. Now, if that feller'd only hurry!"

He walked to the window and peered out into the night; and then, seeing nothing, began to pace restlessly up and down the room.

Josie Farnall, who had recovered consciousness, continued in a half-fainting condition, through fear and the destruction of her fondest hopes. She did not feel the cords that cut into her flesh.

Suddenly the man ceased his nervous walk and again drew near the window. Gid Gale had arrived at the cabin.

It was a moment of great suspense. The man realized that everything depended on the occurrences of the next few seconds. He was resolved that, come what might, he would leave the room, without further delay.

Gale mounted slowly to the window, pressed his face near the pane, to indicate that he was ready.

How the window was opened and he escaped through it the reader knows.

Josie Farnall, driven to desperation by a knowledge of what was occurring, tried to call to Gale; but the gag kept her from making any sound that could reach him.

She writhed and thrashed beneath the cot, as well as she could; and succeeded, finally, in rolling from beneath it and out into the middle of the floor.

But before she accomplished this, Gale and the prisoner had vanished from the window. Not even the sounds of their footsteps came to tell her the course of their flight.

A feeling of desperation was on her. She began to tug at the bonds that held her wrists, wild with the desire to let herself out of the room and overtake Gale before he departed from the place.

Something of hope arose, when she felt the cords slip. She writhed and tugged until the strain was almost too great to bear; and, finally, when her condition was most despairing, one of her hands slipped out of the noose that held it, and was free.

She tore the suffocating gag from her mouth, and then attacked the rope that held her feet. Within a very little while she freed herself of the bonds that had restrained her and so cruelly hurt her.

She was in a perfect fever of dread, fright and nervous impatience. So much time had been unavoidably consumed! She feared she would not be able to find Gale, once she was out of the cabin and at liberty to go in search of him.

She did not try to remove the rope from the other wrist. It was somewhat in the way, and felt extremely uncomfortable; but she had no time to waste in untying it.

Hurrying to the window, she thrust her head through the breach made by the removal of the bars.

The camp was silent, and plunged in gloom; though, even as she looked, she beheld the rosy colors of the dawn kindling in the eastern sky and penciling the pinnacles of the peaks.

She squeezed her body through the bars, and swung lightly to the ground; and, as she did so, a wild outcry arose, followed immediately by an excited hubbub.

She rightly divined that the detective had encountered one of the sentinels.

Out of almost every cabin, as if they had been lying in expectation of such an alarm, poured the outlaws, without scarcely any delay.

The cries of the guard showed her the direction to follow, if she hoped to overtake Gale.

It was a desperate attempt; but she rushed in that direction, almost recklessly; and, because of the excitement, succeeded in passing through the ravine, without detection.

But before she did this, the plunging of horses was heard all about her, showing that the pursuing outlaws were in motion.

She threw herself behind a bowlder, whose gloom served as a screen, and remained there until the first dash was over.

Then she staggered to her feet and hurried on; hardly knowing what direction she was taking.

As if guided by the kind hand of Providence, she found herself at last in the dim trail that led toward Tangled Pine.

She had failed to find Gid Gale; and she knew not whether he was living or dead.

It seemed utterly useless, though, to return to the vicinity of the outlaw camp in the hope of there encountering him.

She reasoned that, if he escaped, he would turn in the direction of the town that was his temporary home. At any rate, she felt she must reach it, as soon as she could, and inform their friends there of his danger.

It was noon, however, before her feet pressed the indistinct trail that led in the direction of Tangled Pine; and she was so worn she could not immediately proceed toward the town.

When she had rested awhile she pushed on; but the darkness of night fell before Tangled Pine was reached.

She could hardly drag one foot after another, she was so exhausted. The excitement and fatigue she had undergone were entirely too much for her strength. She seemed on the verge of a fever.

She did not know how long it was after dark before she beheld the gleaming lights of the town. It appeared to be many, many hours.

She greeted them, with a glad cry; and, summoning her strength again, walked on with tottering feet toward home.

She avoided the business part of the camp, and circled round by way of the mine.

She was congratulating herself on the fact that her long journey was at an end and longing for the quiet and rest of her own room, when she was suddenly brought face to face with Beebe Small!

The semi-darkness revealed him quite plainly. He was standing near the gate; and, when he saw her, he advanced and peered into her face.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" he cried, clutching her by the wrist. "My runaway bride comes back to me!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

GID GALE TO THE RESCUE.

GID GALE hailed the lights of the town with joy. In Tangled Pine he might hope to get together the threads of the mystery that was puzzling him. He might find what had become of Josie Farnall, of Beebe Small, and the others that were concerned in the transactions at the outlaw camp.

He knew the outlaws had abandoned the camp through fear. Their plans had so woefully miscarried! Both himself and the Rev. Poindexter Smith had gone out of the gorge with some knowledge of its location; and the outlaws could not escape the reasonable supposition that this knowledge would be communicated to others, and used to their undoing.

The detective did not know of the oath the minister was compelled to take; neither did he know of the escape of Josie Farnall.

Perplexed by a score of puzzling questions, he rode on toward the town, shaping in his mind a course of action.

He resolved on a reckless boldness. He felt he could rely on the friendship of Drayton and Farnall; and he knew that Drayton was powerful with a certain element of the town. Drayton would aid him and protect him.

Mounted on the outlaw's horse, he would ride courageously up the main street and learn for himself if the outlaws were in Tangled Pine. He was sure he would know the faces of a good many of them, and the voices of many more.

With the rifle resting across his saddle, and held so that he could use it without delay, and the revolver hanging ready in his belt, the detective was well prepared for an encounter with his foes.

Turning into the principal street, he rode down it at a canter; looking to the right and to the left, and carefully scrutinizing every one by the glare of the lamps.

He galloped past Kansas Kate's restaurant; and then, a thought occurring to him, he turned back to it, dismounted, and entered.

Kansas Kate was not there; and none of the employers could tell him where she might be found.

"Likely she's dead, out in the woods," he thought; but he did not put the thought into words.

Although he must have been recognized by various parties in the streets, no one offered to molest him.

Having finished his inquiries at the restaurant, he remounted, and rode on toward the residence of Sam Farnall.

As he neared the familiar gate he beheld two forms there, and heard a woman's outcry.

Spurring quickly forward, he threw himself out of the saddle and hurried to the rescue.

In that voice he fancied he recognized the voice of Josie Farnall.

How she had reached home he could not guess;—he did not try to think, but to act.

He saw her wrench herself from the grasp of the man who was holding her, and dash through the gateway.

The man followed her; overtook her at a bound; and hurled her, with fierce brutality, to the earth.

A loud scream of pain and fear welled from her lips.

Gid Gale saw and heard all this; and a species of insanity took hold of him. He ran forward with the lightness of a cat, and threw himself on Josie's ruffianly assailant.

Up to that moment he did not know who it was. The burly form and snarling voice of Beebe Small informed him.

When he knew the man was Beebe Small, his anger became almost uncontrollable.

What had Beebe Small not done to drive him to madness and murder?

He pressed Beebe to the earth; and began to pound him in the face with his fist.

But Beebe was not the sort of man to take a punishment of that kind without protest.

As the reader knows, Beebe was strong as an ox. He lifted the detective from his chest and staggered to his feet; then the two became locked together in a fierce struggle.

Josie Farnall, who had arisen, and who was wild with fright, sent up one penetrating scream after another. It seemed to her that the world had suddenly become deaf and inhabitantless.

She knew it was the Gold-Camp Detective who was fighting with Beebe Small.

The combat was not so unequal as one might fancy. If Beebe possessed enormous strength, Gid Gale was skilled as a fighter.

What might have been the final outcome cannot be known. The sounds of feet were heard, in answer to Josie's cries, and Beebe Small tore himself from the detective's grasp, and fled out into the darkness.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

KANSAS KATE'S REVELATION.

GID GALE assisted the hysterical girl into the house, delighted that this needed assistance gave him the privilege of holding her for a few moments in his strong arms.

He would have whispered to her of his love, if the individual summoned by her outcries had not been present. That individual was Sam Farnall.

A thousand things were to be talked of, in which Farnall could have a part, from the abduction down to the latest incident of Gale's ride from the robber stronghold.

The entire story was as interesting as a piece of fiction.

With great difficulty Gale turned from the story to the question that had been so long near his heart, and spoke to Farnall, in an interval of Josie's absence, of the love he bore her, and asked of Farnall the privilege of paying court to her, and marrying her, if she consented.

The detective was surprised and gratified by the readiness with which Sam Farnall acceded to these reasonable requests.

"I always think it's best to let girls do as they please in such things!" was the avowal. "That is, if they are not determined on hurling themselves to ruin. If you and Josie can make any arrangements, they'll be perfectly satisfactory to me."

Scarcely had Farnall ceased speaking, when there came a rap at the door, and Basil Brown was ushered in, much to the displeasure of Gid Gale.

He had thought of Brown, and, a little later, would have been pleased to see Brown, professionally—to place on his wrists the steel adornments that often grace the criminal; but he was not ready and willing to see him now.

In fact, Gale was jealous of every moment that kept him from the presence of Josie. He wanted to discuss and re-discuss the abduction, and the things connected therewith, and to speculate, with her help, on the meaning of it all. There were a number of mysteries that he hoped she might aid him in clearing up.

When Basil Brown saw the detective, he seemed much taken aback, and he began to cast about for excuses to beat a retreat.

Gale was quite willing he should go, but fate willed it otherwise.

Voices were heard at the door, followed by vigorous rapping.

Farnall answered the summons, and was faced by Kansas Kate and two officers.

Kansas Kate and the officers stepped into the room.

When Basil Brown saw them he turned ashy pale, and edged toward a rear door.

"Stop that man!" Kansas Kate commanded.

Her voice was husky and weak, but it still held a fiery ring.

"I command you to arrest that man, Basil Brown!"

Brown faced about and tried to bluster.

"Why should I be arrested?" he demanded. "If you lay your hands on me, at the order of that woman, you'll have cause to regret it. You know me! Every one in Tangled Pine knows me!"

The words were swelling uttered, and

in a manner that he fancied would carry conviction.

But the officers did not retreat. Instead, they stood their ground, firmly; and Gid Gale advanced slightly toward the threatened man.

Gale believed that Brown, when he saw he could not win a victory by bluffing, would make a dash for the rear entrance. This little game of Brown's he intended to block.

"What is it, out there?" he questioned, pretending to speak to some one in the rear corridor.

As he said it, he stepped past Brown, and between Brown and the rear door.

"I command you to arrest that man!" Kansas Kate again exclaimed.

And the officers, stung to action by her words, advanced for the purpose.

Brown backed away from them and drew a weapon from his breast. But, before he could use it, Gid Gale rushed on him, wrenched it away, and clutched his hand.

The officers darted forward; and, in another second, Basil Brown was in no position to harm any one.

"I demand the meaning of this outrage!" he furiously sputtered. "I have not killed any one—I have not harmed any one!"

"I charge you with the murder of Old Silvertip!" said Kansas Kate, advancing and shaking a finger in his face. "I have the proofs necessary to establish your guilt. Ha, ha! You didn't dream that I overheard you, when you planned, with Travers, to poison the coffee of this gentleman here?"

Basil Brown trembled and seemed about to fall in his tracks.

"It is a lie!" he hissed. "This woman is crazy! Why do you let her taunt and persecute me in this manner? Why do you let yourselves be made the tools of an insane woman?"

Kansas Kate's excitement was of the most intense kind. Her bosom heaved and her face grew whiter and whiter.

"I've got a wound here, from which I'll never recover," she said, pressing her hand against her side. "But I do not intend to die, Basil Brown, until I see you hung for the murder of Old Silvertip!"

She fairly panted, so venomous was her hate.

Brown recoiled from her, as if her tongue were a serpent.

"You know who I am, Basil Brown! I am Kansas Kate, the restaurant woman. I am a member of your band of outlaws! Oh, yes; you know who I am—that is, you think you do!"

"But you know me better, in another character!"

She swept away a disguising mass of black hair; revealing her natural, soft, brown tresses.

The change in her appearance was surprising.

"Verna Lyndon!" he gasped, staggering back against the door and almost falling to the floor.

"Ay! I am Verna Lyndon! You know me at last, do you? Better for you if you had known me sooner—if you had recognized me when I first came to Tangled Pine."

"But it is too late, now! You have had your innings; now I expect to have mine!"

There was that in the name of Verna Lyndon that seemed to take all the life and fight out of him.

And the reader will not be surprised at this, when he knows something of the story of Verna Lyndon.

Thirty years or more before the occurrence of the events of this narrative, Verna Lyndon was a school-girl, in an Eastern State—a happy, bright and winsome creature, just verging on womanhood.

She met and loved Philip Concreve—then as big a scoundrel as later, when known to the reader as Basil Brown.

That love was disastrous to Verna Lyndon. Deceived and abandoned by the man in whom she trusted, she became a wanderer and a homeless outcast, almost before she emerged from girlhood.

Unfortunately for Philip Concreve—unfortunately, also, for her—she was of a bitter, unforgiving nature. Her love for him became changed to fiercest hate.

She resolved to be avenged—resolved to hunt him down and bring ruin to him, if it

took the remaining years of her blasted life to accomplish her purpose.

Concreve married; and, to this marriage, two children were born.

His home was then near the Ohio. A flood wrecked this home, drowned his wife, and, as he believed, drowned, also, his children.

But this Nemesis—this implacable avenger—was even then on his track, to take advantage of his misfortunes; and the disasters of the flood she worked to serve her revenge.

Then he disappeared from her view, for awhile.

Years passed; but the passing of the years did not dull the spirit that cried out in hate.

Finally, in the person of Basil Brown, she again found the object of this hate, in the wild mining-town of Tangled Pine.

He had committed crimes; thrown off his real name; and fled to the mountains, where he had been, for years, in a state of semi-hiding.

Having located her intended victim, she concealed from him her identity, by making certain alterations in her personal appearance.

The changes brought by the years aided her in this. She became Brown's friend and ally; she was made a member of the outlaw band; she was trusted by him in many ways.

And, all the while, she was planning how she might the more completely and thoroughly undo him, when the moment of exposure came.

Brown understood, now, many things that had been enigmas in the conduct of Kansas Kate. Many cobwebs were swept from his eyes. He beheld the slow processes by which a great pit had been digged for his feet.

And, while he cringed before her, he could but admire the sublime patience that had upheld her through all the years, and that had made of her a consummate actress.

"You will not be too hard on me, Verna?" He pleaded, hoping against hope that he might yet be able to touch some tender spot in her heart.

The request only infuriated her the more.

"If I could torture you with a thousand deaths, I would do it!" she declared. "Oh, if I could—"

She sunk, panting on a lounge, and pressed her hand against her injured side.

It was plain that she was wearing herself out by the vehemence of her emotions. Her hate was consuming her like a fire.

The officers stood near her, not knowing just what to do with their prisoner, now that they had arrested him. But for her burning words they would have led him from the house. She kept them there; not only by her words but by her imperious gestures!

Surely, she was a remarkable woman; made remarkable because she was the embodiment of a never-dying hate.

"You didn't understand the plans I nursed for your benefit? You didn't know I talked and schemed and toiled to marry you to your own daughter? Ha, ha, ha! If you had only known that!"

Such a commotion as was created by this declaration! Her hearers were astounded beyond measure. They could not believe the words they heard.

"What do you mean by that?" the Gold-Camp Detective questioned.

"I mean that Josie Farnall is that man's daughter!—she is the child of the man known to you as Basil Brown!"

"It is not true!" Brown vociferated, becoming paler than ever.

"I planned to marry him to his own daughter that my revenge on him might be the more complete!" she went on.

"And to satisfy this revenge of yours, you would have sacrificed an innocent girl?" the detective said. "A girl who had never harmed you by word or thought?"

A hysterical outburst of laughter came as a reply.

"I would have sacrificed everything! I only regret I did not succeed. I would have sacrificed my own life! And I have done that!"

She continued to press her hand against the wound that so pained her; and now a trace of blood was observed on her lips, indicating an inward hemorrhage.

"And when that failed, I thought to marry his own daughter to his own son!" Though almost in the grasp of death, the fiendish woman seemed to delight in hurling surprises at them.

"Josie Farnall and Beebe Small are your children. They are the Toby and Fannie in whom you delighted. They are the treasures that disappeared at the time of the flood in the Ohio, when your wife lost her life. You thought they were drowned, as she was!"

A distressing groan broke from the lips of the hunted man.

"It can't be so!" he declared. "It can't be so! Toby and Fannie are dead. They were taken from me when they were children!"

All looked to Sam Farnall for an explanation.

"I obtained the children out of an orphan asylum," he confessed. "The girl was a little thing, and I raised her up to call me father and in the belief that she was my own child. The boy became the man you know as Beebe Small. I did not know they were brother and sister. I am sure the people of the asylum did not know of the relationship!"

Kansas [Kate] was gasping and writhing on the lounge. Farnall and the detective hurried toward her. They wished her to live long enough to acquaint them with all the secrets of the mysteries thus broached, if she could live no longer.

Stimulants were given her and she revived. "I am not going to die!" she screamed. "Not till I see him hung for the murder of Old Silvertip. I will not be balked in my revenge. Leave the brandy near me!"

She talked on, revealing, in detail, the schemes of revenge she had so long cherished. Could she have married Brown to his own daughter—or his son to his daughter—she fancied her cup of revenge would have been filled.

She had not learned the lesson that Hate is a master as well as a servant. It had bound her and made her its slave. It had given her no rest, no peace, no happiness, for years. She had dreamed of it; and her waking hours had been full of it.

But it had brought no pleasure. If all her revenges could have been accomplished, just as planned, they would not have satisfied her. Hate is never satiated until it destroys the hater with the hated.

"He that taketh up the sword shall perish by the sword!"

That is the teaching of One who understood the human heart in all its heights and depths.

The detective could scarcely bring himself to understand that Josie Farnall was not Farnall's daughter—that she was not Josie Farnall but Fannie Concreve;—and it was equally puzzling to think of Beebe Small as Josie's brother, Toby Concreve; both the children of Philip Concreve, *alias* Basil Brown.

As for Brown, he would not admit that they could be his children. He became stubborn, realizing that every utterance might be used against him, in some manner, by these enemies.

He even denied, at the last, though he had half-admitted it, that he was Philip Concreve.

"Do your worst!" he sneered. "If you men want to force me into prison, remember that you do it at your peril! If you want to believe the crazy stories of that woman—who confesses herself one of the vilest creatures of earth—believe them! But there will be a penalty! Basil Brown will not be thus stigmatized and disgraced, without demanding a due recompense!"

His threatening words deceived no one. Kansas Kate's story, backed as it was by the statements of Farnall, and by so much circumstantial evidence, was seen to be true. It was hard to doubt her, when she detailed every thing in the most thorough way.

She told how she had rescued the children from the flood, and conveyed them to the orphan asylum, to punish Concreve, giving him the idea that they were dead;—and all things else she narrated with much circumstantiality.

Josie Farnall, never having had any love for Brown as a parent, could not profess affection for him; though she did not hesitate to express her sorrow for the condition in which he was placed.

Brown was careless on this point; and anxious for nothing except the safety of his person.

He accompanied the officers, with many threats of damage suits; but he was forced to go; and the remainder of the night he passed in the Tangled Pine jail.

The Gold-Camp Detective lodged against him the special charges of embezzlement and breach of trust; and then returned to the Farnall home, feeling how small were these crimes compared with those other terrible misdeeds that Brown had committed; and he wondered if Kansas Kate would live long enough to appear against him and establish the fact that he had really murdered Old Silvertip.

He meant to talk with Kansas Kate further on the subject.

She was resting comfortably at Farnall's when the detective left the house.

But, when the detective returned and inquired for her, she was gone.

She had not been seen to leave, and she had told no one she was going. Nor was she to be found at her restaurant, or anywhere in the town.

She had vanished!

CHAPTER XL.

OLD SILVERTIP UNMASKED.

BEEBE SMALL—(having known him by that name, we will continue so to call him!)—was greatly frightened by his combat with the detective, and fled for refuge to the hidden recesses of the Heather Bell Mine.

That Beebe was of a scoundrelly character the reader has had many evidences.

As for his weakmindedness, his willfulness, his vacillations—they were not at all like the character of Basil Brown. But Beebe may be excused, in a large measure, for these. One is not responsible for a lack of intellect. A fall, received by Beebe during his boyhood and since he became a member of Farnall's household, had injured and weakened his brain.

But Beebe may rightfully be held responsible for his crimes; and some of those crimes were of the darkest dye.

Fleeing into the Heather Bell, Beebe burrowed far back in an abandoned tunnel, hiding amid decaying timbers.

The mine was being worked again, but Beebe did not think it likely any of the workmen would venture into the disused portion.

In the early hours of the morning, he heard the miners begin their toil; and, a little later, a form crept toward him through the semi-gloom.

He thought at first this must be a miner; though he wondered why the miner came into that old tunnel; but he quickly saw that it was not a miner, but Old Silvertip.

Again, within the recesses of the Heather Bell, did he see the ghost of the murdered tramp.

He was quite as much frightened as on the previous occasion; and he would have fled from the spot for safety, if the chance had offered.

But Old Silvertip came straight toward him, as if determined to ferret him out.

Then Beebe observed that the old man reeled as he walked and seemed scarcely able to stand.

This was not at all what might be expected of a spirit, to whom earthly infirmities are supposed to be unknown.

Beebe was not convinced, however, that the thing he beheld was not a spirit, and stood ready to bolt from the place.

Nearer and nearer drew the spectral form; the long white hair and beard revealed by the feeble daylight that streamed in.

Beebe moved forward, crouchingly, determined to rush from the tunnel.

The head of the old man was bent to that side; the eyes of the specter rested on the creeping form; and, with a snarl of rage, Silvertip leaped on Beebe.

A knife glittered in the grasp of the old man; and this came down, more than once, inflicting serious wounds.

Beebe screamed out in fright and dismay; his wild cries being heard by the miners working in the adjacent tunnels.

But Old Silvertip did not release his hold, and continued to ply the knife.

Driven to fury and fear, Beebe exerted all his immense, though falling, strength, to lift the form from him and obtain the mastery. And, when thus pushed, Beebe could fight like a lion.

The combat that was raging was some-

thing fearful to contemplate, when the miners hurried into the old tunnel and strove to separate the fighters.

They were pulled apart; and then loud cries of surprise arose from every one.

The white beard and hair were gone from the face and head of Old Silvertip; and the old tramp was revealed as Kansas Kate.

Both Kansas Kate and Beebe Small were borne to the home of Sam Farnall in a dying condition.

The knife wielded by the infuriated and disguised woman had done its fatal work. The last blow given severed an artery and a hemorrhage that could not be checked, and which brought Beebe to his death, in a short time, was the result.

Though he richly deserved his unhappy fate, it was a thing to be regretted, for many reasons; and there were many people in Tangled Pine who sorrowed sincerely. One of these was Josie Farnall. Beebe had terribly wronged her; but she could not forget that, for a number of years, he had been almost as a brother to her, and had favored her with unnumbered kindnesses.

But the sensation that filled all minds and occupied all thoughts for a time was the discovery that Kansas Kate and Old Silvertip were one and the same.

So well had Kansas Kate played her part that no one—not even the shrewd Gold-Camp Detective—ever dreamed she was the white-haired and white-bearded tramp.

Driven to the verge of insanity—if not across the line that divides the sane from the insane—she had fled to the mine, after re-assuming the tramp disguise, hoping to hide there until her injuries were better.

A sight of Beebe made her frantic. Her plans concerning him had miscarried; she felt he was partially to blame; and she rushed on him for revenge.

In the conflict that ensued, the wound in her side was reopened and she was brought to the verge of the grave.

As the old tramp, playing a difficult role, she almost achieved her desires.

It will be remembered that she overheard the plan for poisoning Gale. She resolved to baffle it and turn it to her own benefit.

She took Sam Farnall into her confidence, in this. She possessed a drug, which she substituted for that in the vial shown by Basil Brown.

She secured the detective's cup of coffee, into which some of this drug had been poured. Drinking it, she fled up-stairs; where it took effect, producing a deep sleep, which so resembled death that all were deceived by it.

Farnall and a few friends, who were worthy to be trusted, buried Old Silvertip; resurrected him the same night;—after which Silvertip hid in the mine, at times, where he was seen and mistaken for a spirit by Beebe.

In thus aiding Kansas Kate, Farnall felt he was striking a blow at his enemy, Basil Brown, and aiding the detective, whom he had covenanted to help. Perhaps Farnall cannot in all respects be said to have done just what was right and proper in the matter; but he acted conscientiously.

Kansas Kate failed largely in her revenge. Her life was a long and bitter hate; it brought her no happiness;—on the contrary, it blighted every good impulse of her heart. And she died—died from that re-opened wound—realizing that, in permitting herself to be dominated by a spirit of revenge and cruelty, she had thrown away all the happiness and the good that might have come to her.

Basil Brown was duly tried on the charges brought against him by the Gold-Camp Detective; and, being found guilty, was given a long term at hard labor—a sentence he richly deserved!

The outlaw band was broken up and scattered to the four winds; and the Terror from Tarantula, fleeing to Durango, was killed, a few months later, in a saloon brawl.

The Heather Bell became, eventually, one of the best mining properties in the State, enriching its owner, Sam Farnall.

And Gid Gale now calls himself Farnall's son-in-law; proud of the fact that he is married to the courageous and handsome woman once known as Josie Farnall.

THE END.

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